

Women's Health Goulburn North East

Submission to the Victorian Parliament's Public Accounts & Estimates Committee Inquiry into Gender Responsive Budgeting

2 December 2019

About Women's Health Goulburn North East

Women's Health Goulburn North East is the non-government regional women's health promotion agency for Goulburn and Ovens Murray area of Eastern Division (Department of Health and Human Services).

Women's Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE) covers the 12 municipalities of Moira Shire, The City of Greater Shepparton, Strathbogie Shire, Benalla Rural City, Wangaratta Rural City, Murrindindi Shire, Mitchell Shire, Mansfield Shire, Alpine Shire, Indigo Shire, Towong Shire and The City of Wodonga, a region of 40,380 square kilometres (Regional Development Victoria, 2018). Due to recent name and boundary changes for state and federal funded health services, the WHGNE regional catchment is described in this report as 'Goulburn North East', rather than 'Hume Region', or 'Ovens Murray'.

There are 142,489 women living in the Goulburn North East (GNE) region which is about 4.72% of Victoria's female population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016), including 2,899 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (Murray Exchange, 2016).

Women's Health Goulburn North East is a proud member of Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC), the peak body for gender equity, women's health and the prevention of violence against women.

Why Gender Responsive Budgeting is important for women and girls in Victoria

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) is a fundamental tool for responsible financial management. By addressing the economic and fiscal impacts of the State Budget on women and gender diverse people, GRB ensures that the Victorian economy is serving and benefiting everyone.

Gender responsive budgeting is important for the advancement of women's rights, ensuring government allocates resources fairly in ways that enhance gender equity. It makes visible the different circumstances and economic contributions of men, women and gender diverse people as individuals, rather than within household units. GRB delivers social benefit by ensuring that the distribution of income, assets and expenditure is shared more equally across the community.

Victoria has been leading the way nationally on family violence prevention and investment since the Royal Commission into Family Violence in 2015. With the commitment to full implementation of the RCFV comes an obligation to address gender inequalities across the state. Gendered violence will not end until gender inequality ends, which is why addressing the gender inequalities in the Victorian economy and State Budget is so important.

With the right resources and policy commitment, an economic gender lens should result in expert tweaking of economic and fiscal policy to deliver tailored policy solutions for enduring financial inequities for women and their children.

For further, in-depth information on gender responsive budgeting responding to the full Terms of Reference of the Inquiry, see GEN VIC's submission *Back on Track: Gender Responsive Budgeting* attached to this submission.

The need for Gender Responsive Budget for women and girls in the Goulburn and Ovens Murray (North East) Region

Wage rates

According to the 2016 census, 45.7% of women fifteen years and older across Victoria earn below the minimum weekly wage of \$0-\$649. The GNE region percentage is slightly higher at 47%.

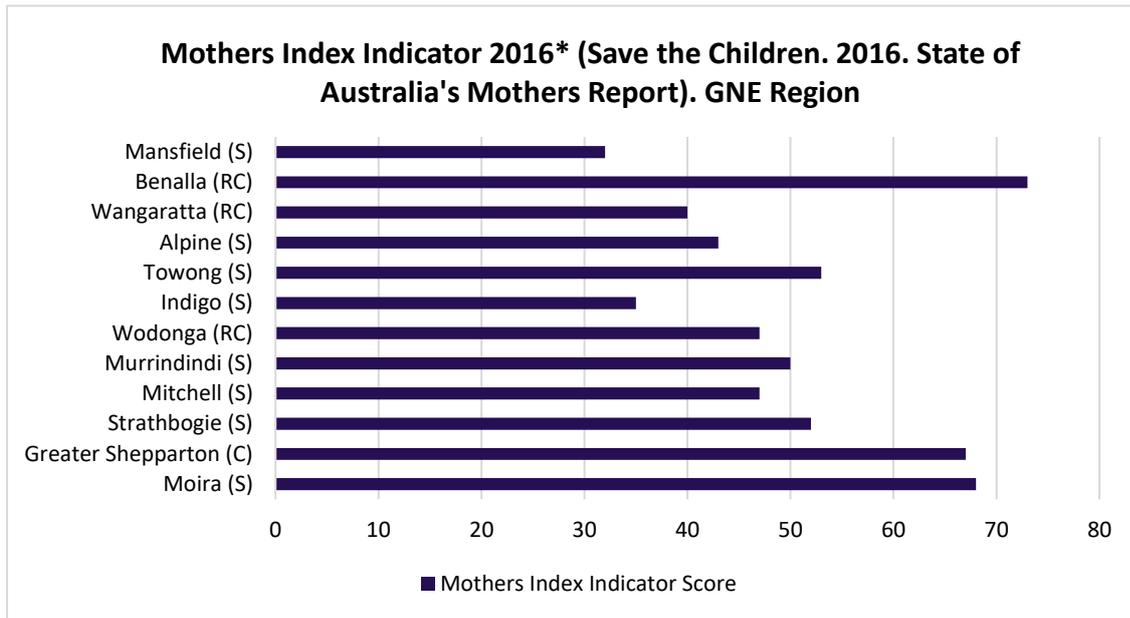
This figure varies slightly across Local Government Areas (LGAs). In the GNE region, just over 50% of women in the LGAs of Towong and Benalla earn below the weekly minimum wage. In contrast 42.9% of women in The City of Wodonga earn below the minimum weekly wage, followed by Mitchell (43.5%) and Indigo Shire (43.9%). Although these numbers are high, they represent the LGAs in the GNE region with the least number of women earning below the weekly minimum wage.

Education

Educational attainment varies across LGAs in the GNE region. State-wide 40.4% of women aged 15 and over have completed Year 12 or equivalent compared to 33.8% of women in the GNE region. The percentages of women with a qualification (including a certificate, Postgraduate Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate Level, Bachelor's Degree, Advanced Diploma or Diploma) is similar to Year 12 attainment. Less than 50% of women aged 15 and over across the GNE region holds some form of qualification.

Mothers Index Indicator

The Mothers Index Indicator measures a mother's health, educational attainment, her family's socioeconomic status and the wellbeing of her children (Save the Children, 2015). It does not measure family violence. The scale ranges from 1 (being the best place for a mother to live), to 79 (being the worst). As can be seen on the bar charts below, most LGAs in GNE sit relatively high on the scale. This indicates several challenges and inequities across these LGAs for mothers and their children.

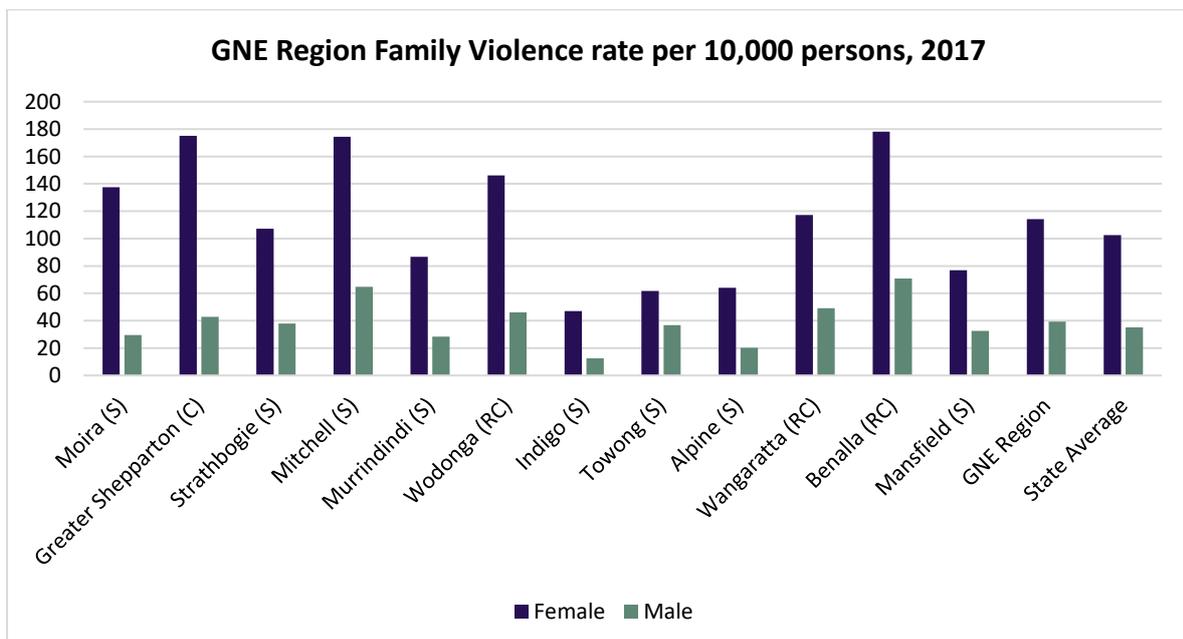


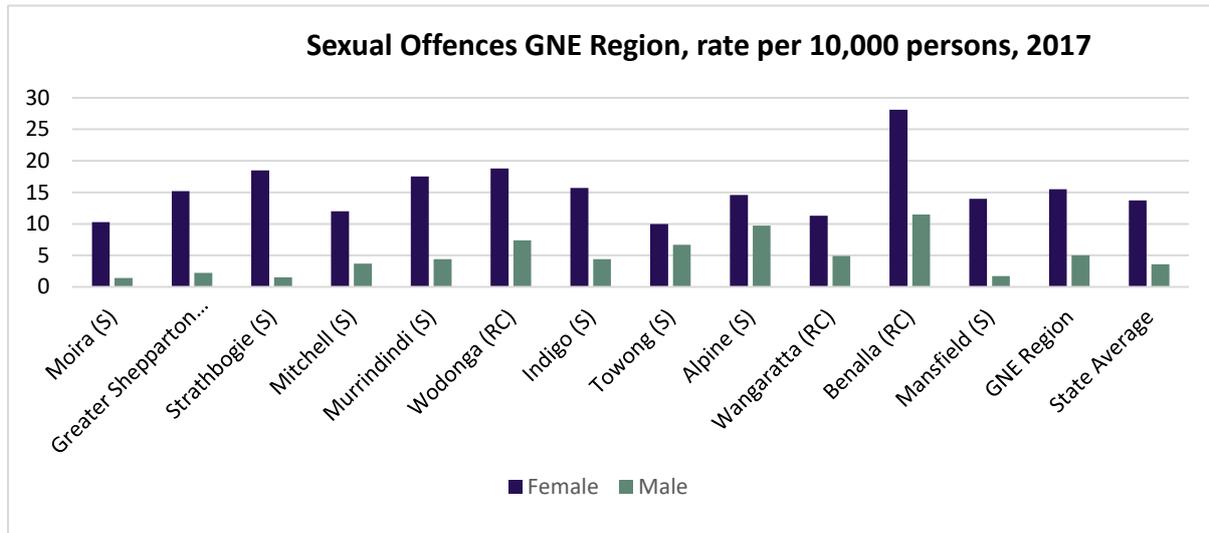
Sexual and Family Violence

Sexual offences are acts and intent of acts against another person of a sexual nature that are non-consensual. This includes rape, sexual offences against children, indecent assault and other sexual offences (Women's Health Atlas, 2016).

Family violence is a broader term than domestic violence as it refers to violence between intimate partners as well as violence between family members. It includes violent and threatening behaviour or any other form of behaviour that coerces or controls a family member or causes that family member to be fearful (Our Watch 2018).

In the GNE region, the LGAs of Moira, Greater Shepparton, Strathbogie, Mitchell, Wodonga, Wangaratta and Benalla all have family violence rates (per 10,000 persons) higher than the state average.





Key recommendations

As a member of Gender Equity Victoria, Women's Health Goulburn North East supports in full the recommendations put forward by GEN VIC in their Back on Track: Gender Responsive Budgeting Submission. These recommendations are as follows:

- Recommendation 1:** That the Victorian Government adopt global best practice in the establishment, implementation and resourcing of gender responsive budgeting in the State of Victoria.
- Recommendation 2:** That gender responsive budgeting be aligned to the Victorian Gender Equality Strategy and the forthcoming Victorian Gender Equality Act.
- Recommendation 3:** That the Office for Women be protected from further machinery of government changes, to enable whole of government oversight of gender equity and gender responsive budgeting.
- Recommendation 4:** That the Department of Treasury & Finance publish annual data on the gender make up of the department, including the representation of women on the boards of its agencies, affiliates and entities.
- Recommendation 5:** That the Department of Treasury and Finance establish a specialist gender economics unit to plan, implement and evaluate gender responsive budgeting, to be supported by the Office of Women's Equality. The gender economics unit should:
- a. be structured, as other Treasury units are, to withstand changes of government.
 - b. ensure all economic and fiscal data is collected in a disaggregated way to measure the differential impacts of the Victorian Budget on women and gender diverse people.

- c. lead whole-of-government gender analysis across the budget cycle, working closely with the Office of Women, to develop Gender Equality Budget Statements, with high level analysis of the impact of annual budget decisions, outputs and asset investments on Victorian women and gender diverse people.

Recommendation 6: That Department of Treasury & Finance's Resource Management Framework be updated to include accountability for gender responsive budgeting.

Recommendation 7: That the Treasury Annual Report include a quality performance measure related to gender equality and gender responsive budgeting in its Revenue Management and Administrative Services to Government

Recommendation 8. That the Department of Treasury & Finance support the establishment of a Gender Equality Budget Group, bringing together civil society organisations, gender economic experts within government and the academy to inform the development of gender responsive budgeting in Victoria, including greater transparency, accountability and analysis. This group may also assist in the evaluation and monitoring of the project, by independently assessing the effectiveness of the GRB approach on gender equity in the State. An outline of the expenditure required to establish a Gender Equality Budget Group is at Appendix C of this report

Attachment:

Gender Equity Victoria's Back on Track, Gender Responsive Budgeting Submission 2019.

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