NATIONAL STRATEGY TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY

WOMEN'S HEALTH GOULBURN NORTH EAST SUBMISSION
APRIL 2023

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Acknowledgements

Women's Health Goulburn North East acknowledges the wisdom, living culture and connection of the Traditional Custodians of the unceded lands on which we work, and acknowledge the profound disruption of colonisation and the Stolen Generations on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We also respect the self-determination of First Nations people.

We are intersectional in our approach and are proud to stand beside generations of great women whose work has brought us closer to justice for all. We believe in shared and just cultural transformation that embraces diversity, and these acknowledgements are part of the ethical principles that guide our work and conduct.

About Women's Health Goulburn North East

Women's Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE) is a proudly feminist organisation supporting the creation of regional and rural Victorian communities that centre intersectional equity, care, wellbeing, and safety. We view the world through a prevention lens and work according to a social determinants framework to address the root causes of gender inequality and gendered discrimination, exclusion, oppression, and violence. We believe in shared and just cultural transformation and locate our work within an ecosystem of broad global alliances working across social movements.

What would a gender equal Australia mean for you, your family, and community?

Before we share our vision, we would like to highlight the terms that we will be using throughout this submission – referring to gender equity and gender justice, rather than gender equality. Gender equity recognises that women and gender-diverse people are not in the same 'starting position' as men, due to historical and social disadvantages, and that treating women, gender-diverse people and men *equally* might not actually be *fair*. So gender equity is about 'levelling the playing field'. Meanwhile gender justice signifies an ambitious and intersectional approach centering the diverse needs, experiences and aspirations of people most impacted by discrimination and oppression. It signifies the achievement of *both* equity (equal distribution of resources, access, opportunities, according to need) and equality (equal outcomes for all). In using these terms, we hope the strategy that eventuates from this consultation aspires to a bold vision of gender justice in Australia.

At Women's Health Goulburn North East, we have an unapologetically imaginative vision of what a gender equitable and gender just Australia would look like. Our vision is based on our belief that gender justice frees us all from living in a world that has been imagined by the patriarchy, that aims to perpetuate patriarchal power dynamics and its patterns of oppression, supremacy and domination based on gender, sex, race, age, ability, geography and other attributes. It's a vision that invites and requires us to collectively imagine and realise a world that works for the public good. That is, a world whose creation is shaped by the imaginations of those at the margins. And we are convinced by bell hooks' observation that the margins are not "sites of deprivation...that [they are] in fact sites of radical possibility."

And so, gender justice would mean an Australia shaped by the voices, experiences, needs and aspirations of those most underserved and spurned by the inequitable systems of today's Australia. It is an Australia that has, first, made reparations with First Nations people and committed to voice, treaty, and truth.

It is a place where every person is valued, loved, respected, cared for, and heard as - and supported to be - their authentic selves. It means that gender and/or other intersectional variables are not considered to be constraints, vulnerabilities, or reasons to discriminate against, oppress, exclude, disadvantage or alternatively, privilege, people – they are instead attributes that make people interesting, unique, and powerful as collaborators in the creation of a vibrant, caring, and dynamic society. Women and girls are not shackled by gendered expectations or stereotypes any more than men are bound by harmful models of masculinity, or gender-diverse people expected to live according to a constructed gender binary.

A gender just Australia is a place where care is made visible, indeed, central, to our social, economic, political and cultural systems; where care is shared, recognised as essential to human life, and valued, and this value goes beyond ascribing it a monetary value, but involves a deep-seated cultural recognition of care's life-giving properties. Care is recognised as the intensive, purposeful, and

foundational work that it truly is, and all people are supported to give and receive it as they want and need across their life courses.

It means that families exist outside of the heteronormative model that society has prescribed for us in our existing systems and can flourish to the extent where extended networks of people come together to provide love, care, guidance, and support to each other in ways that make the most sense to their circumstances.

It means that resources, opportunity, and power are shared equitably; that people can determine what their own good, healthy, happy lives look like and are supported to resource the realisation of those lives.

It means that those who choose to work do so in workplaces that recognise them first as people, not economic units; that their time, skills, energy, wellbeing, and wisdom are uniquely valuable; and all people are remunerated equitably and justly. It means that those who don't work – out of choice, or circumstance – are not stigmatised, or subjected to coercive, punitive, or dehumanising economic and political systems, but are instead supported by the state to live healthy and dignified lives, because the state recognises the innate value and beauty of those lives.

And it should be obvious that a gender just Australia is a place where violence against women and gender-diverse people is not only eliminated but is incomprehensible. A gender just Australia is one in which we no longer need to tally the number of lives lost to domestic and gender-based violence each year and work to slowly, painstakingly convince people to do their bit to whittle down those numbers. We no longer need to account for the economic impacts of this violence on our national GDP, or the lost hours of productivity, or lost human potential. It is simply unimaginable that anyone would perpetrate violence against another person. And incomprehensible that gender, sexual identity, race, age, ability, or other intersectional variables might be used as justifications for perpetrating violence.

What should be the role of government, business, and the community in achieving gender equality?

The notion that gender equity is a "shared responsibility" across the whole of community, government and business has been so often repeated that it is a cliché. We prefer to think of gender justice as a "shared priority" of government, business, and the community – so important is it, and so tantalising is the world it offers us, that it must underpin every decision that is made, every action that is taken, every dollar that is spent.

We see government as playing a key role in modelling respect, care and integrity in public decision making, and making visible the "radical possibilities" of gender justice by working creatively alongside community to broaden what "democracy" might look like. Government can achieve this by bringing community members of all genders, intersectional backgrounds, and geographic locations into decision-making via processes such as participatory, gender-responsive budgeting and citizens assemblies.

These citizen-centred decision-making processes should enable government to legislate for equity and social justice in Australia, implementing policy that:

- Makes available a universal basic income, supported by a suite of universal basic services (health, education, public transport, housing and food security) that are provided and resourced by the state, without condition, to ensure all people living healthy, well, dignified lives, free from gender and intersectional inequity.
- Embeds care as the central tenet of all government work and administration. A human rights framework, akin to that developed by Queensland Anglicare and the Queensland Council of Social Services, is informative for its consideration of the social, cultural, and economic impacts of bureaucratic decision-making.
- Makes paid parental leave more adequate for the needs of both carers and children and more equitable, in terms of ensuring care is shared. We echo calls by The Parenthood for a parental leave scheme of 12 months, at full and equal pay, that is equitably shared between parents/carers, to support both parents to retain connections with their work (if and as desired/required) while caring for their child(ren) in the most developmentally critical years of a child's life.
- Achieves just, dignified, and human rights-aligned social support payments without coercive or punitive conditions or "mutual obligations," to enable people to live healthy lives and satisfy all their basic needs. These payments must include (but not be limited to) income support, sole parenting/caring payments, rent assistance, disability support, aged pensions.
- Ensure the national vision for equity and justice extends to Australia's immigration and humanitarian settlement policy, to ensure that people seeking asylum from persecution, including those seeking refuge due to persecution and exclusion in their home countries based on their intersectional identities, are welcomed, supported and resourced to live a safe, healthy dignified and happy life in Australia.

Businesses and workplaces can prioritise gender equity and intersectional justice by:

- Implementing universal access to paid carers' leave to provide all carers, regardless of gender, with the support they need to care for sick children and other family members.
- Implementing menstrual and menopause wellbeing policies, akin to those developed by the Victorian Women's Trust, framed around offering people who menstruate and/or experience menopause the choice to work from home, stay in the workplace under circumstances supportive of their wellbeing, or take a day's paid menstrual/menopause leave, when they need it. These policies support people who menstruate/experience menopause to "adequately self-care during their period and menopause" without having to mask the reasons for such leave/flexible work arrangements, and without being penalised by having to use up sick leave.

- Implementing other forms of leave that support holistic wellbeing, including leave for gender transition, fertility treatment and family planning, volunteering, study, cultural leave, and pet adoption, to name but a few.
- Proactively improve workplace flexibility – via flexible work days/hours for people of all genders – to support people to share care away from their working lives.
- Tackling racism, racially motivated exclusion/bias and identity strain experienced by Indigenous people in the workplace by implementing accessible, supportive, and accountable racism complaints procedures and ensure widespread workplace understanding of and competency in anti-discrimination compliance processes.
- Dedicating whole-of-team time and resources to actively creating a Reconciliation Action Plan and a gender equity plan. In Victoria, we have spent the past three years supporting certain workplaces to implement gender impact assessments and gender equality action plans as part of the Victorian Government's Gender Equality Act requirements and have noted that much of this work is undertaken within organisations by women, or by individual employees, which poses barriers to the work being fully embedded within organisations/workplaces. This must be a lesson for any future gender justice work that is undertaken within workplaces – so significant is this work for laying the foundations for broader cultural change that organisations/businesses must ensure entire workplaces are committed to it and see it as critical to their work.

Communities can prioritise gender equity and intersectional justice by:

- Actively and unapologetically challenging stigma and stereotypes in every sphere of life
- Practicing solidarity with individuals and communities experiencing intersectional forms of inequity
- Guaranteeing equitable access to resources, opportunities, and social connection for all people
- Creating, valuing, and sharing inclusive, safe, and accessible public and private spaces, including schools, parks and gardens, sporting facilities
- Building a movement around, and committing to radical love - caring, cooperation, community, and connectedness to each other and to our environment - as a cherished and common anchor for a new national culture.

What are your priorities for achieving gender equality in Australia?

Our priorities for achieving gender justice in Australia are reflective of our positionality as a women's health service whose work is concerned with prevention and systems change to achieve optimal health and wellbeing for all women and gender-diverse people.

Prevention calls upon us to focus on the deeply embedded root causes of inequity, poor wellbeing and social injustice and to promote and support the social determinants of health for all people, without

discrimination. For us, this means challenging embedded binary notions of gender, ensuring all people recognise equity and social justice as the primary aspirations of government, business and community, prioritising substantial and radical economic and cultural change to create systems that value and fully support human health, rights, life and wellbeing for all people regardless of their gender, sexual identity, race, ability, visa status, age, geographic location etc.

More specifically, our priorities are:

- Disrupting "gendered, raced, classed, heteronormative and imperialist binary logics" and the power these logics have over our culture, thinking, values, beliefs, institutions, systems, and relationships. It is only by demolishing binary logics of gender and other socially constructed identities in their entirety that all forms of oppression can be eliminated, and intersectional equity and justice can be realised.
- Ensuring social justice and wellbeing are the guiding purposes of government and that this is evident in government decision-making processes, policymaking, its creation/promotion of economic systems, the way it represents and includes community and budgeting. We note that the Australian Government has taken its first tentative steps towards a wellbeing economy with the announcement of wellbeing indicators in its budget of 2022. It is important that this budget work going forward enables government to make decisions not only to prioritise spending on things that make our collective lives better, but also to cut spending on things that detract from collective wellbeing. (This must include tax concessions that privilege some people at the expense of the needs of those at the margins; military expenditure; investment in fossil fuel industries, as some examples.) For justice to be achieved, the government's work must not stop at the implementation of wellbeing indicators in its budgeting but must extend to incorporating an analysis of wellbeing and equity across all its decision-making processes, in the way it interfaces with and represents community, and the measures it takes to demonstrate accountability to community. "Community" in this instance means that government considers a broad scope of opinions, wisdoms, ways of living and being, and values, and certainly Indigenous lived experience, worldviews and understandings of wellbeing must be central to this.
- Replacing punitive and/or coercive social support systems (conditional income support, parenting payments, for instance) with a universal basic income, complemented by universal basic services (that is, government-resourced and universally accessible health, education, housing, and public transport). Such support must be offered to all people, regardless of visa status. This would create the cultural conditions to entrench the idea that all people deserve unconditional, non-judgmental support and care to live happy, healthy, authentic lives and fully participate in society. A universal basic income and universal basic services are critical to eradicate poverty and remove so many of the economic and cultural barriers that stand in the way of gender justice in Australia.
- Ensuring local, regional, state, and national efforts towards climate change mitigation do not come at the expense of social justice but are instead centred around the notion of 'climate justice,' promoting social justice for all on a safe and healthy planet.

What are the underlying challenges for women's economic equality that the strategy could address?

Challenge: A growth- and market-focused economy that does not see or value people and the planet

We contend that economic equity cannot be achieved in an economy that prioritises private wealth for the few and growth at any cost. In our minds, the biggest challenge to economic equity is our economy's fixation on GDP, which is so deeply ingrained in our culture and national psyche. Measuring national prosperity according to GDP fails to address broader health, wellbeing and equity goals and considers negative and harmful events – accidents, wars, disasters, environmental destruction, violence (all of which disproportionately impact women and those whose identities sit at intersections of socially constructed categories of difference) – as positives for their potential to generate profit.

As such, we contend that the strategy must call for a shift to outcomes-focused budgeting – i.e., wellbeing budgeting - which links government spending and policy to a broader set of social justice goals, and values community, equity, nature and care, all things that are conventionally devalued or made invisible by GDP-focused economics.

Challenge: Increasing privatisation of the social determinants of health, underinvestment in the public good, stigmatisation of those who use social support

Our achievement of economic equity is also hampered by the increasing and ongoing privatisation of the social determinants of health (public 'infrastructure' like health, education, housing, public transport), and underinvestment in these public goods. Related to this is stigmatisation of welfare support and those who receive it – all part of a continuing dominance of the idea of 'welfare dependency' over Australian policy, with all the moral implications, presumptions of individual responsibility and shirking of structural responsibility for poverty that come with it.

This strategy has a responsibility to flip these narratives on their head and to recognise and address the multitude of forms of structural disadvantage that stand in the way of economic equity, while laying the groundwork for the public funding of, and true universal access to, basic services like health and wellbeing, education, public transport, and housing.

Challenge: The climate crisis and its disproportionate impact upon people who experience intersectional forms of inequity and injustice

We must only look to recent experiences of flooding and bushfire to note that the climate crisis does not impact everyone equally, and that it intensifies existing forms of inequity. For instance, the climate crisis exacerbates existing inequities experienced by women, particularly in rural, regional, and remote

communities, where they may have more limited social networking and employment opportunities to support their incomes. The tendency for women to take responsibility for care-giving roles can see them excluded from community decision-making and limit their economic independence. Our own research (now part of the body of work by Gender and Disaster Australia) has demonstrated that gender-based violence increases in both prevalence and severity before, during and after disaster, placing women at unique risk. Together, these factors contribute to the "gender-driven vulnerability to climate change."

As a further example, the climate crisis also has a disproportionate impact upon Indigenous people, threatening deep cultural and spiritual connections with Country, which have already been disrupted by colonisation. In coming to terms with how catastrophic this is for Indigenous people, it is crucial to recognise that Country is a "fundamental determinant of health, foundational to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity, knowledge systems and cultural practices" and nourishes Indigenous people and communities "physically, mentally, spiritually, and culturally."

As such, this strategy must consider the multitude of ways the climate crisis will exacerbate existing forms of oppression and inequity and support ambitious action to mitigate the amplification of inequities.

Challenge: Broad cultural and economic devaluing of, and inequitable gendered responsibility for, care work

We will elaborate further on this point in the next section.

What are the underlying challenges in the way we value and allocate care that the strategy could address?

There exists a perfect opportunity for the National Gender Equality Strategy to benefit from the lessons learnt from the inquiry and public consultation process undertaken recently by the Senate Select Committee on Work and Care, to ensure the giving and use of care is valued, equitably accessible and normalised in our lives. We urge the government, via this strategy, to commit to the full suite of recommendations highlighted in the select committee's report.

However, we would also like to take this opportunity to emphasise several points that we feel deserve special attention during the development of this strategy, in terms of the challenges to the way our society, community, economy and government value and allocate care.

These include:

- The framing of the concept of 'care' as being a form of stigmatised dependency set against a backdrop of "a world where independence is the norm of human functioning." For this strategy to successfully set the foundations for our society to value and centre care, it must be careful in

the way it characterises, describes, and delineates care. The voices of disability advocates and activists are valuable in this space, emphasising that "care is an indispensable, and even a central good – one without which a life of dignity is impossible, and which is itself an expression of a person's dignity." These voices and this ethic of care must be at the centre of any attempts the strategy makes to address the invisibilisation, stigmatisation and devaluing of care in Australian society, and the pursuit of equity and social justice.

- The perpetuation of gender stereotypes that undervalue care and see 'care work' (whether paid or unpaid) such as health, aged care, education, childcare, disability support work as "lower in status, and subsequently less deserving of attention and social action towards change" because these bodies of work are traditionally undertaken by women. These stereotypes not only mean that women continue to undertake the bulk of this work – and men are underrepresented in these fields - in Australian society, but that disrupting the gender-segregated nature of this work does not receive the same investment of resources, time, energy, concern or social action as, say, promoting women's participation in the traditionally male-dominated field of science, maths, technology and engineering. Policy moves to rectify this must include a focus on improving wages, resourcing and conditions for these sectors, and shifting the narrative around the foundational economic value of early childhood education and care, aged care, education disability support and other care work.

- A government shirking of the responsibility to care for citizens, as seen in the perpetuation of narratives of 'welfare dependency,' and related scaling back, means-testing or attachment of punitive conditions to social support mechanisms. Care must be embedded as the central tenet of all government work, social services, budgeting and investment, and administration. Government must value care in order for the communityo value it in turn.

- The importance of time for care. Community consultations WHGNE undertook across north-east Victoria in late 2022 to discuss mental wellbeing in regional communities revealed that most respondents identified a lack of time as being a barrier to being able to adequately care for loved ones, community members and themselves. During most, if not all conversations of this nature, these people spoke of the draining and time-consuming nature of full-time work and the way that attention to personal relationships and care was often the first thing to be jettisoned when time ran short. We contend that this heralds the need for the government to commit to the implementation of a four-day working week on full pay, as recommended by the recent Senate Select Committee on Work and Care report (recommendation 28). Shifting to a four-day working week would ensure care was normalised as a part of the working week and enable people to share it more equitably.

- Single-parent payments which only support parents until children are aged eight fail to offer adequate support to some of the most vulnerable families in our communities. As these payments stand, they also devalue the significant, ongoing, life-giving, and foundational economic work that parenting represents. These payments must be made available to parents of children up to the age of 16 to ensure they are fully supported across those most critical years of school, and to enable parents and carers to choose - not be coerced into - the mix of paid work and care work that best suits them.

- Existing parental leave payments do not offer both parents the right and opportunity to share care work equitably and develop the skills to care for and form attachments with their children. Paid parental leave in Australia must match international best practice standards of 52 weeks of leave to be equally shared between parents, or taken fully by sole parents, with superannuation paid in additional to leave payments.

Australia has a National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children – how could the strategy contribute to ending violence and supporting the Plan?

It is widely understood that gender inequity, supported by other forms of discrimination, such as racism and ableism, "sets the underlying context for violence against women", via:

- attitudes and behaviours that condone, justify, excuse, or trivialise violence
- men's control of decision-making and limits on women's independence in public and private life
- rigid gender stereotypes
- harmful models of masculinity that emphasise aggression and control.

As such, the National Plan highlights the need to advance gender equality in order to end violence against women, noting that this is the work of everyone - families, friends, work colleagues, employers, businesses, sporting organisations, media, educational institutions, service providers, community organisations, service systems and governments.

The National Plan is therefore intricately connected with this strategy, with both concerned with the same work of disrupting harmful stereotypes, binaries and masculinities and modelling attitudes, behaviours, norms, and values that centre equity, respect, and care. Lived experience is valuable in this regard, and must be centred in this strategy, to ensure that the voices of victim survivors of family violence are valued and heard as we go about reshaping cultural norms and values to support equality.

We believe this strategy could provide a unified vision of gender and intersectional equity towards which governments on all sides of federal politics, states, territories, communities, organisations and families could work. Indeed, we see the strategy as having a particular responsibility to address the complex intersections of gender inequity with other forms of inequity and discrimination and to lead a far-reaching conversation in Australian society about the prevalence and harms of intersecting inequities, how they interact with and drive violence and what all sectors of society might do to eliminate them.

Australia has a National Women's Health Strategy supported by an Advisory Council – how should the National Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality

support this effort and reflect the role of health and wellbeing in achieving gender equality?

We are pleased that the strategy will emphasise the need for a gendered lens on disease, health and holistic wellbeing, because women and gender-diverse people experience very particular concerns, barriers, challenges and forms of discrimination – including medical misogyny (the collection of health data and information from and about men, and the generalisation of this data across to women) - when it comes to health, precisely because of sex and gender inequity.

However, The National Women's Health Strategy is but one health-related framework that this strategy needs to support and reflect in its striving towards gender justice. It is crucial that 'gender' is not used as a shorthand term for 'women' and that the health and wellbeing needs and priorities of the spectrum of genders, as well as other people of other intersectional identities, are considered and reflected to ensure gender equity in health does not come at the expense of broader intersectional equity in health.

As such, we recommend the strategy also considers (but does not limit itself to):

- The health and wellbeing elements of the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Report, which emphasise the intersections of health with poverty and housing, the importance of culture, experiences of racism in the health system and the impacts of trauma
- The national 10-year LGBTIQ Health and Wellbeing Action Plan, when it is created
- The Australian Disability Strategy.

What do you think are the main challenges to achieving gender equal leadership and representation?

We contend that a major challenge to achieving gender just leadership and representation is our culture's dependence upon binary conceptualisations of femininity and masculinity and the way this thinking has pervaded our understanding of what leadership – and a leader – is or should be. Indeed, this thinking is perpetuated by statements like, "even women can be leaders," or that women must "lean in" to leadership roles, both of which serve to maintain the masculine benchmarks that we so readily associate with leadership and posit the achievement of a leadership position as being dependent upon one's individual behaviour, rather than about structural forces.

This masculine conceptualisation of leadership also implies that "leadership" is about power and one's position within a hierarchical order, rather than a leader's social and moral authority stemming from a broad organisation/population-wide agreement with a set of visions, goals, and processes.

Equitable and just leadership and representation depends upon us viewing it not just through a gender lens, but through an intersectional lens, to move us beyond dominant, masculinised narratives of leaders as 'authoritative heroes' on one side of an active leader/passive follower coin. In short, this

strategy must lead the challenging of our dominant cultural narrative of leadership and begin the process of reimagining and recreating what 'leadership' can be, based on the wisdom of people whose experience of leadership differs from the dominant narrative. Intersectionality theory and an openness to lived experience are critical in this regard.

By taking an intersectional approach to reimagining and recreating the notion of 'leadership,' we can imagine that many of the major barriers to equitable, just, inclusive, and representative leadership (in the conventional sense) will fall away. These barriers include:

- The inflexibility of leadership roles to enable and support people to undertake important care work
- Systemic racism and ongoing colonialism and the ways these shape discrimination against Indigenous people and people of migrant and refugee background in Australian society
- 'Povertyism', that is the influence of negative stereotypes about people who experience poverty and what this means for their capacity to occupy positions of leadership and representation
- Geographic bias in leadership opportunity and barriers to access - whereby people located in regional and rural areas, or who rely upon public transport or accessibility aids to facilitate their participation in society, are often overlooked or discriminated against.

What are critical factors that exacerbate gendered disadvantage over the life course?

Gender is only one social category via which we might understand the experience of disadvantage over the life course. We believe it is critical that this strategy takes an intersectional approach to considering, discussing, and considering equity.

Intersectionality "involves the study of the ways that race, gender, disability, sexuality, class, age, and other social categories are mutually shaped and interrelated through forces such as colonialism, neoliberalism, geopolitics, and cultural configurations to produce shifting relations of power and oppression."

In this way, intersectionality theory requires that we go beyond merely 'adding' social categories to each other or focusing on the individual as an amalgam of several identity categories prone to disadvantage, and instead emphasises the need to consider the complexity of human experiences and identities as a prism that allows us to see, understand and challenge systemic power disparities.

As such, this strategy must deploy an intersectional approach throughout, highlighting the ways that dimensions of identity – gender, race, age, sex, ethnicity, indigeneity, ability, class, income status, geographic location, visa status – can ebb, flow, and interlace, and how these interactions relate to structures of power and have the potential to "manifest in oppression and privilege."

In what areas are stereotypes a key barrier to achieving gender equality?

Stereotypes that attempt to rationalise, justify, or explain existing gender and intersectional hierarchies exist and are perpetuated in every facet of Australian life and society:

- In models of political representation, where they shape our ideals about what leadership is, who leaders are and what they do, who is likely to stand for political election, and how their campaign is run and funded
- In policy and political inquiries, which can normalise harmful stereotypes if care is not taken to analyse the lived impacts and implications of such policy (for instance, the 2018 inquiry into Intergenerational Welfare Dependency, which perpetuated the stereotype that income support was the cause of entrenched disadvantage)
- In health settings, where stereotypes can act as barriers to people receiving the care they need and are entitled to, when and how they need it
- In workplaces, where stereotypes can influence recruitment and promotion policies and processes, the nature of organisational and intra-workplace social hierarchies
- In schools, where they can determine the subjects and interests students are encouraged to pursue and the support students receive from school, home, and the community to undertake their studies
- In communities, where stereotypes can determine who is made to feel included and valued, who is welcomed into certain community spaces, settings, or groups, who is considered a community leader or elder
- In relationships and households, where stereotypes can shape how domestic work is undertaken and shared (or not), how children are raised, how income is earned and shared (or not).

Furthermore, the media – from the news and papers we read, to the programs we watch and advertising we inadvertently 'absorb' - plays a significant role in either supporting and proliferating, or challenging stereotypes that rationalise harmful power hierarchies.

This strategy must 'walk the talk' when it comes to stereotyping and be cautious to ensure it does not perpetuate harmful intersectional stereotypes. Indeed, it must proactively challenge harmful stereotypes and lay ambitious groundwork for a new set of cultural norms and values that centre inclusion and respect.

When building the evidence base and assessing progress, where should we focus?

The process of building the evidence base and assessing the progress of this strategy – that is, the seeking out of, collation, interpretation, valuing, sharing and use of data - must be grounded in intersectional theory and must, itself, model the social justice ideals of equity. As the Global Partnership

for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD) states, "our data futures need to be designed for the protection and empowerment of the most vulnerable people in society."

By taking an intersectional approach to building the evidence base and assessing progress, data is given its historical and structural context and reflexivity is encouraged amongst researchers and evaluation teams, via processes that encourage them to recognise the influence of their own positionality, challenge their assumptions and biases, thus ensuring the process of evidence collection is, itself, equitable and justice based.

Nothing emphasises the importance of making the historical and structural context visible in data collection more than the diverse range of Indigenous perspectives on the formulation of Indigenous data in Australia. Research has revealed that Indigenous people hold a spectrum of beliefs on data collection ranging from a belief that participation in data collection was "important...[because it showed that Indigenous people were] counted as citizens", to political beliefs that "to participate [in data collection] would dismiss [Indigenous sovereign rights]", to beliefs (particularly among those who had experienced institutionalisation) that data collection was "another extension of government control and surveillance over their lives" and that data collection mechanisms were tools for ongoing racism, stigmatisation and colonial oppression of Indigenous people.

Recognising context not only enables more accurate and inclusive data to be collected and utilised to facilitate the progress of this strategy but will also ensure the strategy itself avoids perpetrating the same oppressions and discriminations that contribute to existing inequities in Australia. Data must not only be intersectional, but must be part of a long-overdue decolonising project, and ensure that intersectional communities, themselves, are able to determine:

- The information that they want gathered
- Why that information is gathered
- Who interprets it
- That information is interpreted in a way that serves the communities, themselves
- That decisions based on that data are made by those communities themselves, in their interests.

We believe the GPSDD's guiding principles are particularly relevant to this strategy, ensuring no-one is 'left behind' in the collation, interpretation, sharing and use of data, and promoting data inclusion. These principles are:

- All populations must be included in the data
- All data should, wherever possible, be disaggregated to accurately describe all populations
- Data should be drawn from all available sources
- Those responsible for the collection of data and production of statistics must be accountable
- Human and technical capacity to collect, analyze, and use disaggregated data must be improved, including through adequate and sustainable financing.

The Global Partnership makes five recommendations for achieving these principles:

- Commit to centering the voices of individuals at greatest risk of marginalisation or discrimination in all aspects of data systems and practice - Centering voices means accepting that lived experience is a valid form of evidence of inequality or discrimination. It means finding those individuals who are most impacted by inequality or discrimination and including them in processes to identify solutions, develop organizational projects and programs, or create policy.
- Promote equity across the entire data value chain - The data value chain describes the process through which data creates value. Equity is promoted across the entire value chain by posing critical questions such as:

  - Who has been included in identifying what data to collect and how to collect it?
  - Who is doing the analysis and what do they know about intersecting inequalities?
  - How can data be combined and used to tell a story of intersecting inequality and influence policy?
  - How has inequality been reduced and how do we measure this?

- Ensure that institutional data systems are inclusive and safe - they include all the tools, processes, and policies that influence how practitioners work with data. Making activities within the data value chain inclusive for a specific project or activity may require unique changes. However, making data systems inclusive will require changes that are more standardised or systemic.
- Engage data to increase context awareness and reduce inequality - Intersectional approaches to data should be adopted by governments and organisations to improve the quality of life of people who have been compromised by intersecting inequality.
- Build inclusive institutions - One of the main concerns in intersectional approaches to data is that governments and organisations must reflect on how their institution fosters inclusive data practice. To do this, a high priority must be placed on diversity and inclusion in the workforce. It is essential to critically assess how one's own gender, race, class, and other aspects of one's identity shape the data that one collects, analyses, and uses, and apply this to the approach to data that has already been collected. This means strategies to mitigate unconscious bias must take place at an institutional level.

What accountability and reporting mechanisms would you prioritise?

At the end of the day, this strategy must be scrutinised and evaluated for success by the very people who experience intersectional inequity in Australia. The strategy must demonstrate a commitment to social justice, power sharing and equity across its entirety, including throughout its accountability and reporting mechanisms.

For this to take place, people with lived experience must be considered as more than just 'data points' during the data collection element of an extractive evaluation exercise. People with lived experience of intersectional inequity must be included and supported to lead the evaluation process, and the strategy

must be accountable to those people, demonstrating that it has achieved the things that matter to them.

This means that people with lived experience of intersectional inequities must:

- Be included in evaluation teams, including in leadership and decision-making roles
- Be involved in determining the evaluation's scope and purpose
- Be able to determine how they want to be involved in any evaluation processes
- Be included in the selection and design of data collection tools
- Be involved in participant recruitment
- Have their experiences and outcomes understood, via data collection
- Understand how their contributions will be used and what the evaluation has determined
- Be involved in developing analytical processes and frameworks
- Be involved in where and how evaluation outputs are shared
- Be involved in writing, recording, and reviewing project outputs
- Be able to use alternative reporting and dissemination methods beyond jargon-laden reports
- Be involved in disseminating project outputs
- Be supported, remunerated, and valued for their work, wisdom, time, and skill.