

## Gender Equality Act FAQ & Responding to Curly Questions

### Key Areas for Pushback

#### THEME: Questioning the need for workplace gender equality

**Question or statement:** Aren't we equal already?

<i>Response Statement</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
Although organisations may strive to be equal, there are many societal and systematic factors that contribute to inequalities experienced by women, men, and gender non-binary people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women live longer on less</li> <li>• Older women are the fastest growing cohort of people facing homelessness</li> <li>• Female dominated roles and industries are traditionally paid less than male dominated industries (WGEA)</li> <li>• Occupational gender segregation has remained persistent over the last 20 years (WGEA)</li> </ul>

**Question or statement:** Haven't we already done that?

<i>Response Statement</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
There has been significant progress to date, but evidence would suggest we have a long way to go.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 54.4% of employers acted on identified gender pay gaps (WGEA).</li> </ul>

**Question or statement:** 'We do not have a problem with gender inequality in our workplace'

<i>Response Statement</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
Gender inequality can be experienced by all. However, overwhelmingly it affects women and can sometimes be hard to see, particularly if you are not subjected to it. The workplace gender equality audit process provides an opportunity to not only highlight areas for improvement but also celebrate your success and progress to date.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18.3% of CEO's in Australia are women</li> <li>• 6.5% of primary carer's leave was used by men</li> <li>• 38.1% of full-time worker are female</li> <li>• 75.9% of employers support flexible work</li> </ul> <p>Reference: WGEA</p>

**Question or statement:** 'We have an award; therefore, we can't have a gender pay gap'

<i>Response Statement</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
Organisations do not intentionally set out to cause a gender pay gap however, they do exist. They are often caused by discrimination and bias in hiring, promotion and pay decisions. For example, starting salaries, bonuses and pay rises. Other factors include time spent out of the workforce caring for children and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently, Australia's national gender pay gap is <b>13.4%</b> (WGEA).</li> <li>• in November 2020, women's average weekly ordinary full-time earnings across all industries and occupations was <b>\$1,562.00</b> compared to men's average weekly ordinary full-time earnings of <b>\$1,804.20</b> (WGEA).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although more women than men complete tertiary education, their graduate salaries are lower (Gender Inequality Affects Everyone).</li> </ul>
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**Question or statement:** ‘We already have a diverse range of people in our organisation’

<i>Response Statement</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>*Refer to the workplace gender audit process and results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acknowledge that your organisation may have a diverse range of people employed. However, it is important to critically think about how overlapping forms of discrimination and bias play out in the workplace, and it’s impacts on a person’s workplace experience and opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women have a significantly lower rate of workforce participation compared to CALD men (47.3 per cent and 69.5 per cent respectively).</li> <li>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have a considerably lower rate of workforce participation compared to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (51.5 per cent and 65 per cent respectively).</li> <li>Mature age women have a considerably lower rate of workforce participation compared to mature age men (58.8 per cent and 71.9 per cent respectively).</li> <li>Rural and regional women have a lower rate of workforce participation compared to rural and regional men (56.5 per cent and 66.8 per cent respectively).</li> <li>Women with disability have a considerably lower rate of workforce participation compared to men with disability (49.4 per cent and 57.8 per cent respectively).</li> </ul> <p>Reference: Women’s Workforce Participation</p>

**THEME: Resourcing and logistics**

**Question or statement:** ‘I don’t see how this relates to my work?’

<i>Response Statement</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>Gender equality is everyone’s business and impacts everyone.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Gender Equality Act will embed new ways of working that will be applicable for all staff including, gender impact assessments and the actions that will fall out of the organisations gender equality action plan.</li> <li>Workplace flexibility</li> <li>Promotion and recruitment</li> </ul>

**Question or statement:** ‘How much is this going to cost the organisation? We have limited funding’

<i>Response Statement</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>Investing in gender equality has seen to be a successful business decision. By doing so, you will see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased productivity and performance</li> <li>• Allows for women’s and men to share the load and enable a greater workforce balance i.e., decreased burn out and increased mental and physical health</li> <li>• Improved organisational culture and staff moral</li> <li>• Improvements in the gender pay gap</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning saves \$31 million each year due to flexible work</li> <li>• Mercy Health saves \$23 million each year due to flexible work</li> <li>• Wannon Water saves \$150,000 each year due to flexible work</li> </ul> <p>Reference: Flexible work, good for business?</p>

**Question or statement:** ‘You can’t do this kind of work flexibly’

<i>Response Statement</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>Flexible working arrangements and leave entitlements including parental leave help Victorians of all genders balance paid work with other responsibilities. But structural and cultural factors mean women are far more likely than men to work flexibly, especially by working part time, and taking longer parental leave.</p>	<p>There are different types of flexibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Time: When work happens. Includes flexible hours/scheduling, part-time work, job sharing, split shifts, compressed hours/compressed week, variable year employment.</li> <li>- Location: Where work happens. Includes working remotely at home and from different locations.</li> <li>- Tools: How work happens. Includes technology, workplace design, other conditions and enabling factors.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not all types of flexibility are ideal in every role, but some type of flexibility is possible in every role.</li> </ul>

**Question or statement:** ‘We don’t have the time or resources for this’

<i>Response Statement</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>It is with great acknowledgement that this work may seem overwhelming, particularly because it is new legalisation. However, this work has multifaceted benefits as it meets the needs of many other legislative plans and policies i.e., Reconciliation and disability action plans- leading to more efficient and effective work plans and outcomes. Streamlining is key!</p>	<p>Benefits of investing time and resources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributing to the prevention of violence against women and girls</li> <li>• Improving the economy e.g., the gender pay gap</li> </ul> <p>Reference: The benefits of Gender equality: Victorian Government.</p>

**THEME: Rigid gender norms and stereotypes**

**Question or statement:** ‘Women are just more suited to caring roles’

<i>Response Statement</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>Traditional gender roles and stereotypes that are set out for women favour the notion that women are more suited for caring roles. However, it creates a barrier for men to enter these professions and access flexible working arrangements.</p> <p>Caring roles are predominantly female-dominated professions however, they are often unvalued and underpaid.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women in Australia spend 64.4% of the total work per day in unpaid care work, compared to 36.1% for men</li> <li>• The unequal distribution of caring work between men and women reinforces gender stereotypes, such as the ‘male bread-winner model’</li> <li>• Gender inequality in unpaid care work contributes to the gender inequalities in the labour market</li> </ul> <p>Reference: WGEA</p>

**Question or statement:** ‘Women aren’t as good a leader’

<i>Response Statement</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>Evidence suggests that women in leadership are more likely to have successful outcomes for organisations particularly surrounding productivity, performance, and profitability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisations that are women lead are seen to have positive productivity, performance and profitably.</li> </ul>

**Question or statement:** ‘How does this benefit men?’

<i>Response Statement</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>Gender equality benefits everyone. It works to break apart the rigid gender roles and stereotypes that society has created for us. it creates a world where everyone has the same rights, responsibilities, and opportunities to thrive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional stereotypes are difficult for any men to live up to. The pressure to be a ‘real man, to be physically and emotionally strong, and be the main income earner.’</li> <li>• Many workplaces do not offer men extended parental leave or flexible hours.</li> </ul>

**References:**

Flexible work, good for business? Modelling the bottom line impact of flexible work for the office of prevention and women’s equality (OPWE). <https://www.respect2040.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Flexible-workplaces-return-on-investment.pdf>

Gender Inequality Affects Everyone: Victorian Government <https://www.vic.gov.au/gender-inequality-affects-everyone>

Women’s Workforce Participation: Statistics <https://womensworkforceparticipation.pmc.gov.au/data-snapshot.html>

Workplace Gender Equality Agency: Workplace gender equality <https://www.wgea.gov.au/about/workplace-gender-equality>