The Northern Territory Gender Equality Framework

2019-2024

Consultation document

NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT

Contents

Introduction

The Northern Territory Government is committed to fairness and addressing inequalities where they exist.

The four key focus areas for the Gender Equality Framework (the Framework) seek to address the gender inequalities that manifest in the NT. Some of these inequalities include the highest rates of domestic, family and sexual violence in Australia; high levels of ill health and chronic disease and low levels of participation rates in physical activity for all genders; and a gender pay gap in the NT that is the second highest in Australia.

To address gender inequalities in the Northern Territory, it is essential to include gender equality approaches into government policies, practices and initiatives as well as gain a better understanding of gender inequalities as they manifest in everyday life. By developing a local culture that values and upholds equality in all its forms, the Northern Territory could be a place where all people feel respected as equals.

By seeking to eliminate discrimination, prevent gender-based violence, address unconscious bias in systems and challenge harmful stereotypes faced by people of all genders, we are creating a foundation for all Territorians to lead happier, healthier and more fulfilling lives.

The Northern Territory Gender Equality Framework will be developed through consultations and community engagement with Territorians from all walks of life. It will focus on priority areas for action and is intended to be used to design tailored, relevant and sensitive approaches to address the gender-based inequalities experienced by Territorians. This document is designed to guide these consultations.

The Framework is intended to interlace with and complement other Northern Territory Government policies and frameworks such as the Northern Territory's Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018-2028: *Safe, Respected and Free from Violence* and *Safe, Thriving and Connected: Generational Change for Children and Families 2018-2023, Starting Early for a Better Future: Early Childhood Development in the Northern Territory 2018-2028,* and the *Northern Territory Population Growth Strategy, 2018-2028.* The Framework will also take into account national commitments such as the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022* and international commitments including the *United Nations Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) and the *United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women*.

History has shown that advancing social change can be a slow process and it may take multiple generations for genuine equality to be realised. However, the immense benefits that gender equality can create in the lives of all Territorians and the Northern Territory as a whole are worth the effort. The development of this Framework is a step towards achieving a more just, more equal, and more inclusive society for all persons regardless of their gender.

Community Consultations

This document will be used to guide consultations with the Northern Territory community to gain insights and localised knowledge into how gender affects each of us in our daily lives.

The Northern Territory Gender Equality Framework is to be developed through a consultative approach across the Northern Territory. Through an approach grounded in the lived experiences of people in the Territory, we hope to create a Framework that shows a way forward in addressing gender inequalities in the Northern Territory over the next five years.

There will be a number of ways in which Territorians will be able to provide input into the Framework. There will be opportunities available for public comment through the Northern Territory Government's 'Have Your Say' website. The draft framework will also be available on the Office of Gender Equity and Diversity's website for comment.

The Office of Gender Equity and Diversity will be undertaking consultation with community groups, interested organisations, entities and individuals, peak organisations and advisory groups in urban, rural and remote parts of the Northern Territory.

A schedule of consultations will be posted on the Office of Gender Equity and Diversity's Website: https://territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au/policy/office-of-gender-equity-and-diversity.

To increase opportunities for public input and deliberation the consultations will be advertised in local newspapers, on local radio and on the Office of Gender Equity and Diversity's Facebook page.

All feedback is welcomed and all Territorians are encouraged to provide input.

Submissions and comments to the will be accepted until **1 August 2019**.

Please send submissions to the Office of Gender Equity and Diversity.

Email: tf.oged@nt.gov.au

Post to: PO Box 37037, WINNELLIE NT 0820

By hand to: Floor 6, Darwin Plaza Building, 41 Smith Street, Darwin

You can contact the Office of Gender Equity and Diversity on (08) 8999 8373.

Understanding Gender Equality

Gender is how a society or culture describes and constructs the different roles of females and males. It is not the same as sex, which refers to the biological characteristics of men and women. Gender refers to the tasks, functions and roles attributed to women and men in public and private life. Gender roles, and the opportunities and expectations attached to these roles, can change over time. The term 'gender' also refers to the way in which a person identifies or expresses their masculine or feminine characteristics. Gender is generally understood as a social and cultural construction. A person's gender identity, or gender expression, is not always exclusively male or female and may or may not correspond to their sex.

Gender inequality results from men, and those traits traditionally associated with masculinity, being favoured over women, and traits traditionally associated with 'the feminine', being devalued. In societies with high levels of gender inequality men often possess more power to control decision making in personal, community, and political life and women's needs and interests are ignored, under-acknowledged, or not adequately addressed.

The belief that men and masculine ideals should maintain control at all times inevitably results in an array of disempowering and unsafe situations for women and some members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Gender norms that pressure men to suppress their emotions and seek to control others are unhealthy for men and can damage relationships between men, women and children.

Gender discrimination means treating individuals differently because of their gender and can include rejection, exclusion or unequal treatment of people often based on whether or not they conform to gender-based norms and stereotypes. It is important to note that homophobia and transphobia are also rooted in the same gender prejudice that seeks to enforce gender stereotypes and that vilifies those who do not conform.

Everyone can benefit from gender equality. People who live in societies with a high degree of gender equality experience many positive benefits, including better quality of life, lower levels of depression, and lower incidents of violence.[1]

In addition to being a fundamental human right and a prerequisite for social justice,[2] gender equality is linked to many positive economic outcomes and social benefits.

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[1] Holter, O.G., 2014, *What's in it for men? Old Question, New Data. Men and Masculinities,* 17(5), 515-548.

[2] UN Women, March 2015, *International Women's Day*, accessed at http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/3/pga-ed-speech

Glossary of useful terms

Cisgender

Cisgender refers to a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth. For example, a person who was born with male genitalia and identifies as a man is cisgender.

Domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV)

Domestic and family violence is defined as a pattern of behaviour aimed at controlling a partner or family member thorough fear, for example by using behaviour which is violent and threatening, and to place at risk their immediate and longer-term safety and wellbeing. A combination of tactics and forms of violence are often used to exercise control over women, children and other family members. The violence can take the form of physical, sexual, stalking, emotional or psychological and financial abuse and it can include criminal and non-criminal behaviour. Sexual violence encompasses a range of non-consensual sexual acts including sexual harassment, technology facilitated sexual harassment and coercion, and unwanted sexual touching. Forms of sexual violence include rape or sexual assault; child sexual assault and incest; intimate partner sexual assault; unwanted sexual contact/touching; sexual harassment; sexual exploitation; showing one's genitals or naked body to other(s) without consent; masturbating in public; watching someone in a private act without their knowledge or permission.

Gender binary

Gender binary refers to the understanding that there are only two genders and that everyone identifies as either one gender or the other. Today, many people believe that gender occurs in a spectrum and that a person can locate their gender anywhere on that spectrum.

Gender equality

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) gender equality refers to 'equal chances or opportunities for groups of women and men to access and control social, economic and political resources, including protection under the law'. Gender equality does not mean that all genders must be treated the same. As people have different biological sex differences, in certain circumstances it is reasonable for there to be different legal rights for people of different sexes. For instance, maternity leave for pregnancy and birth would only apply to females, whereas parental and carers leave and/or flexible work arrangements should apply to anyone with childrearing or caring responsibilities regardless of their gender.

Gender equity

Gender equity refers to the fair allocation of resources, opportunities, programs and decision making according to the level of gendered disadvantage.

In contrast to gender equality, which seeks to distribute opportunities and resources equally giving everyone the same starting line, gender equity calls for the allocation of resources and opportunities based on need, allowing everyone to have the same finishing line.

One can look at 'gender equity' as the mechanism by which 'gender equality' may be achieved.

Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap is the difference between women's and men's average weekly full-time base salary earnings, expressed as a percentage of men's earnings.

The gender pay gap is caused by a multitude of factors including, but not limited to, discrimination and unconscious bias; gender segregation; women's disproportionate share of unpaid caring and domestic work; and a lack of workplace flexibility across all industries.

Gender segregation

Gender segregation refers to the differences in representation of men and women in different areas including occupations and industries. This occurs as a result of multiple social and economic factors.

For the purpose of this Framework, 'gender segregation' has been used to refer to the horizontal and vertical segregation of men and women in the workforce. Horizontal segregation refers to the under- or over-representation of women and men in certain occupations or industries. Vertical segregation signifies the unequal distribution of men and women in leadership categories (occupational hierarchies).

Gender stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are preconceived notions informed by history and culture of what the characteristics, attitudes, behaviours, roles and occupations of people should be based on their gender. For example, 'women are nurturing' and 'men are strong.'

Heterosexuality

Heterosexuality is a sexual orientation where the person is primarily attracted emotionally, physically and sexually to members of the opposite sex. For example, a heterosexual woman is attracted to men.

Homosexuality

Homosexuality is a sexual orientation where the person is primarily attracted emotionally, physically and sexually to members of the same sex. For example, a homosexual woman is attracted to women.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the understanding that multiple forms of discrimination can overlap, leading to compounded disadvantage. For example, an Aboriginal woman may face both racial discrimination as an Aboriginal person, and gender discrimination as a woman. Intersectional approaches recognise the diversity of experiences due to the many intersecting social identities one person may have and compounded disadvantages they may experience.

LGBTQIA+

The acronym stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex and asexual. The plus symbol at the end of the acronym is open to interpretation. However, it is generally considered a symbol of inclusion. It represents an intention to ensure that no one feels excluded, including those who do not identify with the other identities specified in the acronym and also those who are allies of the LGBTQIA+ community. It is important to note that this acronym is inclusive of sexual orientation as well as gender identity terms.

Perpetrator

Perpetrator refers to people who commit acts of domestic and family violence. Though both men and women can be perpetrators of domestic, family and sexual violence, the majority of victims are women and children and the majority of perpetrators are men.

Transgender

Transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs the biological sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender impacts people differently

Each person will have different experiences with gender equality. Our community must recognise and respond to the multitude of ways that gender norms and stereotypes are interrelated with, and often compounded by, other forms of disadvantage and discrimination.

There are a number of groups in the Northern Territory community who view and experience gender inequality in different ways and whose experience is compounded by other forms of discrimination and exclusion. For the Northern Territory Government to adequately understand and address issues experienced by different groups, targeted consultations with people from diverse backgrounds will take place to inform the Gender Equality Framework.

Targeted consultations and workshops will take place with:
- Aboriginal communities, including individuals and organisations providing services to or advocating for these groups
- People from migrant, refugee, and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including community groups, individuals and organisations providing services to or advocating for these groups
- People living with disabilities and organisations providing services to or advocating for these groups
- People from remote, regional and rural areas of the Northern Territory and organisations providing services to or advocating for these groups
- People from LGBTQIA+ communities and organisations providing services to or advocating for these groups.
- Young people and those providing services to and for young people
- Older people and those providing services to and for older people

Questions for consultation:

1. *If you a member of any of the groups or communities mentioned above, please provide us with specific feedback in relation to the four focus areas of Safety; Health and Wellbeing; Economic Security; Leadership and Participation and how gender effects your everyday life?*

2. *What specific actions do you think could be taken to improve gender equality for any of these groups?*

3. *What needs to specifically be taken into account when addressing gender inequality for any of these groups?*

4. *What other groups should be engaged through targeted workshops to better understand how gender effects their lives?*

Gender across the life course

Gender norms and stereotypes also affect people differently during each stage of life.

The Northern Territory Gender Equality Framework will take a whole-of-life approach to understand and address people's diverse experiences with gender inequalities during each stage of life.

Children	From an early age children's sense of self-worth and identity formation is influenced by social expectations of gender. Children become aware of gender stereotypes and are typically conscious of the social relevance of gender before the age of two.[3] Between the ages of two and three, children begin to self-select activities and toys that society assigns to their gender.[4]
Young People	Negative experiences relating to gender during young adulthood can have a significant impact on a person's ambitions, interests, study choices, lifelong habits, and their self-perceptions of their skills and aptitudes. Through increased engagement and partnerships that encourage positive attitudes towards diverse gender norms, social cohesion and cultural integrity, the framework will seek to address some of these negative impacts for those transitioning to adulthood.
Adults	Rigid gender norms and expectations as well as caring responsibilities can restrict some women from participating more fully in the workforce. These gender norms can also limit the time men feel they can spend outside of work with their families and can limit their opportunities to take up flexible work arrangements or caring responsibilities.
Older People (60+)	The cumulative effects of gender inequalities throughout the life course affect people in different ways. With almost 50 per cent less in retirement savings, older women are at a higher risk of financial and housing insecurity and homelessness than older men.[5] Older Men are less likely to seek help for mental issues and have the highest age-specific suicide death rate in Australia.[6]

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[3] Powlishta, K., Sen, M., Serbin, L., Poulin-Dubois, D. & Eichstedt, J, (2001) "From infancy to middle childhood: The role of cognitive and social factors in becoming gendered" in Unger, R., ed. *Handbook of the Psychology of Women and Gender*, New York, NY: Wiley; pp. 116- 132.

[4] Kane, E. (2006) "No Way My Boys are Going to be like That!" Parents' Responses to Children's Gender Nonconformity" in *Gender and Society*, 20(2), 149- 176.

[5] Commonwealth of Australia, 2016, 'A husband is not a retirement plan': Achieving economic security for women in retirement, accessed at https://www.pmc.gov.au/resource-centre/office-women/government-response-husband-not-retirement-plan-achieving-economic-security-women-retirement

[6] NT Department of Health, 2018, *Northern Territory Suicide Prevention Strategic Framework, 2018-2023*, accessed at http://apo.org.au/system/files/189631/apo-nid189631-996761.pdf

Principles

Activities and actions under the four key focus areas of the Northern Territory Gender Equality Framework will be guided by the following principles:

1. Creating a safe, supportive and inclusive community with equal opportunities
2. Respect for all people
3. Focusing on long-term strategies to challenge systematic gender inequality
4. Building the evidence-base
5. Sharing responsibility and strengthening community partnerships

Questions for consultation:

5. *Please comment on how these principles can sufficiently ensure that activities undertaken to increase gender equality achieve their intended outcome.*

6. *Please include anything missing from the principles that you think should be included.*

7. *How might each of these principles help increase gender equality?*

Focus Area 1: Safety

Safety refers to being protected and free from danger, risk or injury. Gender affects people's experiences in relation to safety in many different ways. Greater gender equality is a key element to improving the safety outcomes for all people.

Gender-based violence refers to any harm perpetrated against a person on the basis of gender. This type of violence is used to reinforce conformity to gender roles and can happen equally to any person, regardless of their gender identity.

Gender inequality is the primary driver of gender-based violence. Gender-based violence can include physical, emotional, sexual and economic violence. Some forms of violence are direct, such as emotional, physical, or sexual violence in close relationships, while other forms of violence are indirect, such as norms and attitudes that structurally disadvantage or harm people on the basis of their gender. All forms of sexual violence, including coercion, sexting, trafficking, and homophobic bullying, are also gender-based violence.

Violence against women and girls is a serious and widespread social problem. The Northern Territory has the highest rates of domestic, family and sexual violence in Australia and Aboriginal women are considerably more likely to be victims of this form of gender-based violence. Aboriginal women account for 89 per cent of all victims of domestic and family violence in the Northern Territory.[7]

Gender-based violence takes on many forms and can be compounded by other types of disadvantage. Women and girls with disabilities are twice as likely as women and girls without disabilities to experience violence throughout their lives.[8] Certain groups of culturally and linguistically diverse women are more at risk of experiencing trafficking, forced and servile marriage or honour killings. Elder abuse can impact older people of all genders. Men and boys can also be victims of gender-based violence, however they are more likely to experience male to male violence. It is widely acknowledged that the majority of persons affected by gender-based violence are women and girls.

Some members of the LGBTQIA+ community can run a higher risk of becoming targets of physical or verbal attacks due to their sexuality and non-conformity to predominant concepts of gender. LGBTQIA+ youth run a higher risk of experiencing specific kinds of gender-based violence, including verbal homophobic abuse (61 per cent), physical homophobic abuse (18 per cent), and other kinds of homophobia (nine per cent), including cyberbullying, graffiti, social exclusion and humiliation.[9] Gender stereotypes and norms influence the lives of lesbian, gay and bi people who become victims of violence or bullying. In a similar manner, dominant gender norms that seek to maintain a clear division between two genders is what motivates violence against trans gender diverse people.[10]

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[7] Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2017, 4510.0 Recorded Crime – Victim, 2014-2016

[8] Women With Disabilities Australia, University of New South Wales and People with Disabilities Australia, Stop the Violence: Improving Service Delivery for Women and Girls with disabilities, Sydney, 2013.

[9] Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, 2010, *Writing Themselves in 3: The Third National Study on the Sexual Health and Wellbeing of Same Sex Attracted and Gender Questioning Young People*. La Trobe University.

[10] Our Watch, Victoria State Government, GLHV, 2017, *An analysis of existing research; Primary prevention of family violence against people from LGBTI communities, accessed at https://www.ourwatch.org.au/getmedia/32e193c0-66f9-4957-81bb-62c2245a9d88/Primary-Prevention-of-FV-against-LGBTI-people-Report-(Accessible-PDF).pdf.aspx*

As we learn about the specific kinds of gender-based violence experienced by people living in the Northern Territory, this knowledge will inform policies and practices to prevent gender-based violence.

The Northern Territory Government's Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018-2028 – *Safe, Respected and Free from Violence* guides a whole-of-community all-of-government response to violence in the Northern Territory. This Framework aligns with the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women 2010-2022* and is informed by the work of Our Watch and Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS).

This Framework will support initiatives which prevent domestic and family and sexual violence and have a strong focus on children and young people and the specific contexts and places where inequalities and violent behaviours are shaped. Actions under the Framework will focus on reinforcing respectful relationships and embedding and normalising non-violent behaviours in our community.

Safety Focus Area: Questions to guide consultation

8. What are people's experiences in relation to safety in your community? How do people with different gender identities experience safety?

9. What are the most important areas to focus on to reduce rates of gender-based violence in the Northern Territory?

10. What suggestions do you have to improve safety and people's feelings of safety in your community?

Focus Area 2: Health and wellbeing

Gender is among the most powerful determinants of health and wellbeing. Gendered health inequalities impact everyone, but in many different ways. We must actively challenge and change gender norms and stereotypes that deter people from maintaining healthy lifestyles and achieving good health and wellbeing.

There are many ways to think about health and wellbeing. This Framework adopts the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition of health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease"[11].

Gender inequality contributes to poorer health and wellbeing outcomes.[12] Overall, gender affects the ways people access and understand information about managing, preventing and controlling diseases; their subjective experience of illness; attitudes about health; patterns of health service use; and their perceptions of quality health care.

The factors that determine people's health experiences are shaped by biological sex differences as well as differences in the way people are treated based on gender norms and stereotypes. This Framework will seek to reduce gender inequalities that lead to poor health outcomes and support improved health outcomes for all Territorians.

Help-seeking behaviours and the use of health services, including disclosing mental and physical health issues to health care professionals, are significantly influenced by gender. In general, compared to women, men are less likely to seek assistance or communicate health problems and can often have less social support networks. Transgender and gender diverse people can experience barriers to care for a variety of reasons, including discrimination, a lack of awareness by health care providers, or a lack of specific services in their area.

While gender differences in anatomy, hormones and genes play a role in increased risk for some diseases, gender norms influence people's behaviours and habits, which impacts upon their health and wellbeing. Rates and types of injury and disease experienced by people are significantly shaped by gender-based norms that influence eating habits, fitness and participation in sports, exposure to risk factors in the workplace engagement in violent, risk-taking activities and excessive alcohol and/or drug consumption. The proportion of overweight and obese people in the NT is high (72.9% men and 56.3% of women) compared to other parts of Australia.[13] Males in the NT have higher rates of alcohol consumption, however more young females are drinking at high risk levels than young males.[14]

People from certain social groups, including Aboriginal people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse and migrant backgrounds, and people from the LGBTQIA+ community can have unique healthcare needs. This Framework seeks to address the complex gender-based health inequalities of Territorians from diverse backgrounds to improve people's experiences with health and wellbeing across the life course.

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[11] Constitution of World Health Organisation, Constitution, accessed at https://www.who.int/about/who-we-are/constitution

[12] World Health Organization, *Gender and women's mental health*, accessed at http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/genderwomen/en/

[13] Ibid

[14] Ibid

Health and Wellbeing Focus Area: Questions to guide consultation

11. In what ways does gender impact on your health, access to services or health outcomes?

12. How does gender impact on the health of people in your family and community?

13. What can be done to improve health outcomes for Northern Territorians?

14. Please describe particular groups in the Northern Territory community that experience adverse health outcomes due to gender? How can the outcomes for these groups be improved?

Focus Area 3: Economic Security

Gender inequality in the areas of education, employment and economic security contribute greatly to other inequalities based on gender experienced in Australia. Equality of access to education and employment are necessary for economic security. Economic security enhances wellbeing, reduces vulnerabilities and enables people to participate fully in all aspects of life.

Women and girls are most disadvantaged by inequalities in the areas of education, employment and economic security. Women undertake twice as much unpaid work in the household and take on more caring responsibilities than men,[15] they predominate in lower paid, part-time and casual employment,[16] and are more likely to experience discrimination and harassment in the workplace.[17]

According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2017, Australia ranks first in the world for educational attainment for women. However it ranks number 62 for wage equality for similar work and 56 for labour force participation.[18] This means that women in Australia have the best education outcomes in the world but this achievement is not translating into wage equality or employment equality.

When unpaid care work is accounted for, the average work day for women in Australia is nearly twice as long as men, yet women earn on average 15.3 per cent less per week than men do. Australian women account for 70 per cent of unpaid carers of children and 58 per cent of primary unpaid carers for the elderly and people with disability or long-term health conditions.[19]

The gender pay gap is a measurement of the difference between women's and men's average weekly full-time equivalent earnings and is generally used to measure women's overall position in the paid workforce. The national gender pay gap is currently 14.6 per cent. The Northern Territory's full time pay gap is currently 20.5 per cent, making it the second highest gender pay gap in Australia.[20] The gender pay gap and the difference in time taken out of the workforce due to caring responsibilities results in lower retirement savings for women compared to men. In 2017 the average superannuation balance for women was $68 000 and for men it was $112 000.[21]

Gender norms in the workplace, particularly in male dominated industries can make it difficult, or impossible, for men to access flexible workplace arrangements or parental leave to enable them to act as primary carers for their children. Workplace cultures that demand long hours of physical presence in the workplace are modelled on outdated notions of primary breadwinners (usually men) who are supported to engage in paid labour through their partner's (usually women) unpaid domestic and caring labour at home. In this modern era, it is increasingly

[15] 4125.0 - Gender Indicators, Australia, Feb 2016

[16] 6333.0 - Characteristics of Employment, Australia, August 2017

[17] Australian Human Rights Commission, 2008, Sexual harassment: Serious business - Results of the AHRC 2008 Sexual Harassment National Telephone Survey, accessed at
https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/sexualharassment/serious_business/SHSB_Report2008.pdf

[18] World Economic Forum, 2017, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2017*

[19] Australian Human Rights Commission, 2018, *Face the Facts: Gender Equality 2018,*
https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018_Face_the_Facts_Gender_Equality.pdf

[20] Workplace Gender Equality Agency, August 2018, *Australia's Gender Pay Gap Statistics, accessed at*
https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/gender-pay-gap-statistic_0_1.pdf

[21] The Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia Limited (AFSA), October 2017, *Superannuation account balances by age and gender, accessed at*
https://www.superannuation.asn.au/ArticleDocuments/359/1710_Superannuation_account_balances_by_age_and_gender.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y

necessary for families to have dual breadwinners to live above the poverty line. These current economic and social conditions have compounded the levels of work (paid and unpaid caring labour) done by people, particularly for women. The changing face of Australia's workforce requires a change in workplace cultures to ensure that all people are able to balance their work and life responsibilities without disadvantage or discrimination.

Economic Security Focus area: Questions to guide consultation

15. What are the economic security difficulties experienced by particular groups because of their gender? What are some of the activities that could be done to minimise these difficulties?

16. What are some activities that could be undertaken to increase equity in unpaid work and caring responsibilities?

17. What are some of the causes of economic insecurity in the Northern Territory? What could be done to address some of these causes?

Focus Area 4: Leadership and participation

This area focuses on everyone being included and considered in decision making processes. Decision making bodies should be reflective of the people that they make decisions for because these groups decide where resources are allocated, which issues are addressed, and who benefits from the actions taken.

Having equal gender representation in leadership and decision making benefits everyone because it can bring diverse experiences and perspectives, reduces group think, lessens the likelihood of unintended consequences, and fosters economic growth. Though women comprise half of our population, they do not represent half of our leadership and decision making positions in many areas of our society.

It must also be acknowledged that certain groups, including Aboriginal people, people with different abilities, people from LGBTQIA+ communities and culturally and linguistically diverse people, can face multiple, compounded, and often systemic barriers that can make it particularly difficult for people from these groups to attain positions of power and leadership.

The Northern Territory has made considerable progress towards achieving gender equality in positions of political leadership. In 2016, the Northern Territory Government made Australian history by announcing a majority female cabinet, electing five women to its eight person leadership team. This is the highest proportion of women to ever be introduced into an Australian cabinet. Currently, 12 of the 25 elected members in the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory are women and one member openly identifies as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community. By way of comparison, the first Northern Territory Legislative Assembly in 1974 women constituted only two of the 20 elected members and homosexuality was a criminal offence.

The Northern Territory Government has committed to improving the gender balance on government boards and committees with a target of 50 percent of women on government boards and committees by 2020, the current proportion is 40.6 percent.

An important aspect of this focus area is exploring where and why there may be systemic barriers to people's participation in leadership and decision-making positions and what may be able to be done to address these barriers.

Leaders from different sectors, ranging from government to community to the business world, have the power to influence decisions about strategic priorities and the allocation of resources. Striving for equal representation of women and people from diverse backgrounds in positions of leadership is necessary for progressing gender equality. A diverse group of leaders is more likely than a homogenous group of leaders to be aware of and committed to addressing and putting in place systems to overcome structural barriers that disadvantage certain groups of people.

Leadership and Participation focus area: questions for consultation

18. How can the Northern Territory Government improve engagement with different groups of people living in the Northern Territory community to ensure more diversity in consultation? What factors need to be taken into account for particular groups?

19. What are the barriers to leadership for particular groups? If so, what are they and how might they be addressed?