



Government
of South Australia

Office for Women

Gender Pay Gap TASKFORCE

Interim Report

2023

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Introduction

Background

The State Government established the South Australian Gender Pay Gap Taskforce (the Taskforce) in September 2022 to provide high level advice to the Minister for Women and the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence (Minister) and the South Australian Government on issues related to the gender pay gap. The Taskforce is a state-wide, multi-stakeholder panel of experts in the fields of gender equality and industrial relations.

THE TASKFORCE has been established as a time limited, high level advisory body whose focus is to:

 **IDENTIFY**

Identify the specific issues leading to the gender pay gap in the South Australian context.

 **CONSULT**

Consult with subject matter experts and diverse cohorts to understand their experience of the gender pay gap and to ensure an intersectional response.

 **ADVISE**

Advise the Government on how the factors that contribute to the gender pay gap apply in South Australian workplaces, including the public, not-for-profit and private sectors.

 **MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Make recommendations where change can have the most impact, including policy and legislative reform, and considering best practice.

Closing the Gender Pay Gap in South Australia

The gender pay gap in South Australia is 6.7%.¹ This means for every dollar a man makes, women make on average just 93.3 cents. This gap has lasting impacts on women's economic security. The gap starts from the moment a woman enters the workforce and accumulates over a working life to a significant wealth gap by retirement.²

Addressing the gender pay gap in South Australia is everyone's responsibility. Closing the gender pay gap will require collaborative action from the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors.

The Taskforce recognises that the South Australian Government as legislator, policy maker, and as the largest employer in the state holds significant levers to reduce the gender pay gap. By demonstrating leadership in addressing the gender pay gap in the public sector, the South Australian Government may also influence practices in other industries. The Taskforce recognizes the private sector's interest and the potential it holds in addressing the gender pay gap. In particular, the Taskforce acknowledges small and medium businesses often have limited resources to create and implement policies to promote gender equality. Resources are needed to ensure their specific needs are met.

The social services industry and not-for-profit sector also have a role to play in reducing the gender pay gap. The gender pay gap is marked in these industries, with female-dominated industries having lower wages on average than male-dominated industries.³ In addition to their interest in addressing the gender pay gap from the perspective of an employer, these sectors also have a role to play through awareness raising and advocacy.

Taskforce Membership

Sarah Andrews MP

Chair (Nov. 2023 – Current)

Sandy Pitcher

Chief Executive of the Department for Human Services – Interim Chair
(Oct. 2023 – Nov. 2023)

The Honourable Irene Pnevmatikos

Member of Legislative Council – Chair (Oct. 2022 – Sep. 2023)

Abbey Kendall

Director and Principal Solicitor of the Working Women’s Centre

Andrew Kay

Chief Executive Officer of Business SA

Professor Carol Kulik

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Erma Ranieri

Commissioner for Public Sector Employment

Jane Pickering

Chief Executive Officer of Eldercare Australia

Dr Jenny Purdie

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Jodeen Carney

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Matthew O’Callaghan

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Natasha Brown

General Secretary of the Public Service Association

Olive Bennell

Chief Executive Officer of Nunga Mi:Minar

Ross Womersley

Chief Executive Officer of the South Australian Council of Social Service

Dr Sanjugta Vas Dev

Director of the Office for Women

Taskforce Approach

Since its establishment in September 2022 to November 2023, the Taskforce has met on eight occasions, including a planning day. At the planning session, the Taskforce finalised its Terms of Reference to focus on delivering evidence-based recommendations to the South Australian Government within the required timeframe.

To achieve this, the Taskforce decided to focus on the three biggest drivers of the gender pay gap as identified in the *She's Price(d)less* report⁴ which comprise gender discrimination, gender segregation in job type, and care, family responsibilities and workforce participation.⁴

Underpinning the Taskforce's approach to date has been consultation with organisations that have demonstrated best practice and progress towards achieving gender equality within their workplaces.

From August to November 2023, the Taskforce contacted over 60 peak bodies and conducted 15 interviews with a diverse range of South Australian peak bodies and organisations that had undertaken or were implementing initiatives to address the drivers of gender inequality in their organisation, profession, or industry.

The insight gained from the interviews, desktop research, and Taskforce members' experience and deliberations, informed this interim report and led to the establishment of the four focus areas below:

FOCUS AREAS



DRIVERS OF THE GENDER PAY GAP

- Gender Discrimination
- Gender Segregation in Job Type
- Care, Family Responsibilities and Workforce Participation



EFFECTIVE POLICIES AND PRACTICES

- Removing Gender Bias From Recruitment Practices
- Implementation and uptake of flexible working practices



NEEDS OF SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ORGANISATIONS

- Support measuring the gender pay gap
- Resourcing
- Government support of organisations working towards gender equality



ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

- Consider intersectionality

Measuring the Gender Pay Gap

The gender pay gap measures women's position in the economy in comparison to men. It measures the difference between average earnings of women and men in the workforce.⁵

There are a range of different methodologies and data sources for measuring the gender pay gap, however, research has shown that gender pay gaps favouring men remain apparent, regardless of the data source or approach used.⁶

Gender pay gap data in Australia is primarily produced by two different organisations—the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA). The ABS calculates the gender pay gap based on the base salary of full-time workers. In comparison, WGEA includes base salary plus overtime, bonuses, and additional payments of full-time, annualised part-time and casual workers.⁷

WGEA reports the gender pay gap in Australia is 22.8% as of November 2022.⁸ This means for every \$1 on average a man makes, women earn just 77.2c.

The ABS reports the gender pay gap in Australia as of May 2023 was 13.0%. In South Australia it was 6.7%.⁹

Focus Area 1

Drivers of the gender pay gap

KPMG in conjunction with WGEA and the Diversity Council of Australia released the 4th edition of *She's Price(d)less* in 2022.¹⁰ The *She's Price(d)less* report is the only analysis in Australia that assesses the contributing drivers of the gender pay gap to explain why the gender pay gap exists. The report tracks changes in drivers relating to the gender pay gap and provides critical evidence and analysis of the barriers to equality in Australia.

She's Price(d)less identified three key drivers of the gender pay gap in Australia: gender discrimination, gender segregation in job type, and care, family responsibilities and workforce participation.¹¹

Key Driver 1

Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination accounts for 36% of the gender pay gap in Australia and is defined as the part of the gender pay gap that is not able to be explained by factors associated with people's employment, labour force participation, household characteristics and unpaid care and work responsibilities.¹²

Gender discrimination can be systemic or overt and can influence the other factors that drive gender pay gap. It can manifest as systematic undervaluation of women's economic contribution, less meaningful tasks being allocated to women, fewer opportunities for women to be promoted, biased hiring practices and less access to training for women.¹³



7 of 15 interview participants expressed they were aware of, or had personally experienced, **gender discrimination** within their industry

The consultation interviews highlighted that despite many participants having first-hand experience of gender discrimination in the workforce, many others remain unaware of this issue. Seven out of the fifteen interviewees approached by the Taskforce have expressed they were aware of, or had personally experienced, gender discrimination within their industries. Of the eight participants that expressed they had not, four conceded that unconscious bias could be playing a role in their industry. Of the five male interviewees, only one expressed they were aware of gender discrimination within their industry.

Despite the research showing gender discrimination is the largest contributor to the gender pay gap, the interviews and other research indicate a lack of awareness of this particular issue across a broader sector of the community. This highlights the need for greater awareness of gender discrimination, particularly the covert and unconscious ways it manifests in the workplace.



Quotes from consultation interviews

- *...[I experienced] direct efforts to reward and promote male staff and not female staff.*
- *... some of those unconscious bias behaviours you would tend to see, where it occurs, concern decision on hiring, promotions, decisions around remuneration and compensation or other terms and conditions of employment... It is not expressed in very explicit discriminatory terms, or may not be obvious.*
- *I don't think anyone can say there is no discrimination in any industry, but I am not aware of it.*

This is particularly pertinent as 30% of Australian men believe 'gender inequality doesn't really exist'.¹⁴ Research by Plan International in 2023 also found that out of the 2,522 people surveyed, nearly 60% indicated that they felt gender equality has nearly or already been achieved in Australia.¹⁵

Key Driver 2

Gender Segregation in Job Type

Gender segregation in job type accounts for 24% of the gender pay gap in Australia and can occur at the occupational or industrial level.¹⁶

Occupational segregation refers to the unequal distribution of women and men in high paying roles. For example, the underrepresentation of women in management and overrepresentation in administrative work. Occupational segregation is influenced by gendered norms around 'women's work' and 'men's work'.¹⁷

Industrial segregation refers to the unequal distribution of women and men in high paying industries. For example, the high number of women in education and primary care relative to the low number of women in mining.

Gender segregation is a significant contributor to the gender pay gap as female-dominated industries have lower wages on average than male-dominated industries, regardless of educational attainment.¹⁸ Additionally, studies have shown that occupations which have gradually become female-dominated, have exhibited a steady decline in average earnings.¹⁹

Strong industry and occupational gender segregation persists in Australia with women largely working in the same jobs they did 35 years ago.²⁰ For example, childcare services consistently see the most significant sex-segregation, with males making up only 6.39% of the workforce in Australia.²¹

Similarly, the defence industry in South Australia experiences high levels of gender segregation. An analysis of the top 20 defence industry companies found that less than one in five employees were women, less than one in seven managers were women, and one in 14 new apprentices were women.²² Even defence organisations with relatively strong gender representation have poor gender diversity across job categories and management levels.

For example, one of South Australia’s largest defence industry employers has an organisational level of 20% women, however, only 1.77% of its technicians and trades workers are women, compared to 95% of its clerical or administrative workers.²³

The interviews revealed organisations struggle to recruit women to fill particular roles and that a lack of women, in particular labour markets is a major contributing factor. A representative from the education sector reported that the same issue applies to men in women-dominated roles such as teaching. Given the bulk of students undertaking teaching degrees at university are predominantly women, the majority of job applications for teaching positions are filled up by women, resulting in a 75% female dominated workforce.

Research has demonstrated that gender norms developed at a young age influence the educational pathways and career opportunities people take, ultimately contributing to the gender pay gap.²⁴ Education and training can play a large role in addressing this. Schools have the opportunity to positively influence attitudes and beliefs for the purpose of changing future outcomes for both men and women.



Quotes from consultation interviews

- *... it was incredibly evident going out into the workforce the gender imbalance within the architectural profession, and, more broadly, construction especially.*
- *...roles which traditionally have been more physically demanding—working outdoors, warehousing and so on—it's probably across the board more male-dominated.*
- *When you're dealing with smaller children...that's a detractor for a lot of male teachers to work in that space because they are concerned about the perceptions...*
- *Although, we're seeing increasingly men come into those caring roles...it's been difficult for us. One of the barriers to bringing in more men is the preference of some of the older women who are receiving the services don't want men to be providing personal support..”*

A 2017 research paper found that “common stereotypes associate high–level intellectual ability with men more than women [and] these stereotypes discourage women’s pursuit of many prestigious careers.”²⁵ The study showed that at age five, children did not differentiate between boys and girls in expectations of “really, really smart.” However, by age six, girls are less likely to believe that members of their gender are “really, really smart” and will begin to avoid activities they believe are for “really, really smart” children.²⁶

The result of this avoidance can be seen in the subject choices of South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) students.

Despite girls and women making up 53% of SACE subject enrolments, they are dramatically under-represented in certain subjects, including: business, enterprise and technology (34% women); specialist mathematics (28% women); and physics (24% women).²⁷ This demonstrates the way in which gender norms influence behaviour and can ultimately result in gender segregation in job type.

Although the education sector acknowledges the impact of gender norms on future career choices—the SACE Board Strategic Framework states that “students choice of subjects may still be influenced by gender stereotypes”²⁸—more needs to be done to address the formation of these norms.

Key Driver 3

Care, Family Responsibilities and Workforce Participation

33% of the gender pay gap is attributed to care, family responsibilities and workforce participation. This includes years not working due to parental leave, part-time employment, and unpaid care work. Reasons for career interruptions are varied, however research suggests that career breaks taken to care for family tend to reduce future wages while other breaks have little effect.

Women returning to work after a break often do so in lower status or lower paid roles. Across the first five years of parenting their first child, women's earnings are reduced by 55% on average. During the same time, men's earnings remain unaffected.²⁹

Unpaid care and work are inherently gendered issues. They contribute to labour market inequalities, are associated with employment quality and increase the likelihood of part-time or insecure casual and contract work. In Australia, women spend 43% less time in paid work than men, yet 81% more time in unpaid work.³⁰ This gendered division of labour impacts on women's capacity to engage in paid labour.

The interviews revealed that attitudes towards parental leave are changing but still have a long way to go in order to achieve gender equality in the workplace. A key theme that arose was the need for parenting to be viewed as gender-neutral and parental leave be taken up by more men.

Focus Area 2

Effective policies and practices

Removing gender bias from recruitment practices

Bias in recruitment and promotion practices can inadvertently promote continued gender segregation in job type. Many interview participants raised this as an area for organisations to review when trying to improve gender equality and minimise gender segregation in job type.

For example, a representative from the wine industry described how one business reviewed their recruitment process to attract more women into roles traditionally held by men. With the goal of removing unconscious bias against women, this particular company undertook an analysis of position descriptions, the language used in job advertisements as well as interview process.

A representative from the manufacturing sector similarly recognised that, “just waiting for women to apply is not a solution. Businesses need to make proactive changes to their workplace as well as their recruitment methods.” This interview participant recommended reviewing recruitment processes as “decisions which may not themselves be overtly discriminatory, may be having a negative impact on the attraction of women.”

// Quote from consultation interviews

I don't know whether we [are] ever going to see true equality and participation from women unless it's actually socially accepted and supported for men to take leave because I think there's still a perception that if you do it [take leave] then you're going to jeopardize your career or you're not going to be viewed as being as committed to work and I think we have a long way to go.

Implementation and uptake of flexible working practices

The research interviews highlighted the importance of flexible working practices for improving gender equality within the workplace. For example, a representative from the aged care sector stated that the best policy the organisation had in place for addressing the gender pay gap was the flexible working arrangements available to all employees.

Research has shown flexible working practices can be key enablers of gender equality, supporting more women to stay in the workforce, and more men to take on a greater share of caring responsibilities.³¹

Critically, it is important that both men and women are encouraged to use flexible working practices. A survey of over 2,000 Australian employees found that nearly 70% of respondents agree that in order to reduce stigma around caring responsibilities, men should be encouraged to request flexible working arrangements.³² WGEA data shows while 70% of workplaces had a flexible work policy in place, only two percent have targets for men's engagement in flexible work practices.³³

Women are nearly three times more likely to use flexible working arrangements to manage caring responsibilities than men.³⁴ Men are also more likely to have a request for flexibility denied.³⁵



Quotes from consultation interviews

- *I think COVID has really helped the mentality of men actually taking sick leave to look after their children or working from home to do school pick up and those sorts of things.*
- *To achieve truly profound change in our industry, we need more initiatives that are focused on the root of the problem, rather than merely addressing symptoms. This is re-distribution of domestic work, and childcare responsibility. Policies aimed at increasing the number of men taking parental leave and increasing the number of men using flexible work arrangements do have an impact here.*
- *I think there is a real support in terms of returning... from maternity leave to part-time working arrangements or flexible working arrangements.*

Focus Area 3

Needs of South Australian organisations

Support measuring the gender pay gap

The interviews identified that many organisations are experiencing difficulty in measuring their gender pay gap in a meaningful way. Experiences varied from not understanding what the gender pay gap is and how to measure it, to complex discussion around how roles should be valued and classified.

Many peak bodies reported that organisations in their industry did not necessarily understand the concept of gender pay gap or how to go about conducting an analysis. Additionally, organisations that report to WGEA commonly expressed difficulty in accurately translating WGEA role classifications to their internal organisational structure, making it difficult to take away meaningful results from WGEA gender pay gap audits.

One organisation reported a 2 to 3% discrepancy between an internal gender pay gap audit they conducted and the WGEA pay gap. This organisation attributed this to the way in which they classify and value roles.

Resourcing

Interview participants consistently raised the issue of small organisations lacking the resources to effectively create and implement policies to support gender equality. Sharing resources was often raised as a good way to support small organisations.

Human Resources (HR) was also commonly outlined as a key measure to support gender equality. A representative from the health sector stated, “That was a really sort of pivotal thing that we did... And I know it seems really like a small change [funding a HR team], but it had such a big impact and that's where it's all grown from”.

Organisations that lacked an internal HR function were reported to face more challenges. For example, a representative from the architecture industry explained that many smaller firms do not have an internal HR department, resulting in policy being created ad hoc without the necessary thought and planning required to create change.

// Quotes from research interviews

- *Checklists, template approaches to policies, those sorts of things that can assist small to medium businesses, that can be implemented into a management structure of a business without them necessarily having to invent the process themselves. That generally works well.*
- *Sharing model policy, sharing information because [we are] aware that many of the other practices in the country don't have the resources to develop it.*
- *The need for policies is being driven by those who need it. So parental leave policy, for example, I constantly have people emailing me going, have you got some examples? Our practice doesn't have one. I'm pregnant. We need one.*

Government support of organisations working towards gender equality

The South Australian Government is a leader in achieving gender equality and closing the gender pay gap through its roles as policymaker, funder, procurer, and as an employer.

Research by UN Women states that public procurement represents a significant opportunity to build a more inclusive economy and promote gender equality.³⁶ Research by WGEA similarly found that gender segregation can be reduced by awarding procurement contracts to suppliers who are committed to employing women in traditionally male-dominated industries.³⁷

The government's purchasing power is a powerful lever that can be used to incentivise businesses to address the gender pay gap.³⁸ Gender responsive procurement policies can be utilised to promote investment in women-owned businesses and businesses demonstrating progress in reducing the gender pay gap. The interviews revealed that gender-responsive procurement policies could potentially create a perverse effect of organisations creating policies merely to meet procurement requirements, rather than integrated and transparent strategies. It is therefore important that gender-responsive procurement policies are aligned with supports for organisations to implement change effectively and meaningfully.

Focus Area 4

Additional research

The gender pay gap is a complex issue that will require ongoing research and monitoring. In particular, there is limited research and data on the intersectional impacts of the gender pay gap and how to most effectively reduce it for people facing additional and intersecting forms of disadvantage.

Intersectionality has a compounding effect on the gender pay gap. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disability, and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds face additional barriers and disadvantage. Whilst there is limited data available on how the gender pay gap impacts specific cohorts, it is reported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are less likely to be employed and earn less on average than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and non-Indigenous men and women.³⁹ In 2021, only 23% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women had a weekly personal income of \$1,000 or more, compared with 34% of non-Indigenous women and 50% of non-Indigenous men.⁴⁰

People with disability also face additional barriers to participating in the workforce, especially those with a severe or profound disability who are more likely to have a lower level of personal income than people without disability. This is exacerbated for women with a disability, with 40% of them experiencing a low level of personal income compared to 36% of men with a disability and 27% of the general population.⁴¹

Next steps

Based on the findings of this report, the Taskforce will deliver a final report towards the end of 2024 with recommendations focused on three priority areas of exploration:

Opportunities to bring together research and practical expertise and lead evidence-based initiatives across academic disciplines, practice fields, government and the business sector in the areas of workplace gender equality, with a focus on reducing the gender pay gap across different sectors, increasing women's representation in leadership roles and reducing gender discrimination.

Support for small and medium-sized businesses to address the gender pay gap through raising awareness about the gender pay gap, developing resources showcasing best practice and how to remove gender bias from recruitment practices and effectively create and implement policies to support gender equality.

Opportunities to reduce the gender pay gap in the public sector through mechanisms such as gender impact assessments when developing or reviewing significant policy, programs and legislation and gender responsive procurement practices, initiatives to eliminate unconscious gender bias and gender discrimination in the SA public sector and initiatives to reduce gender segregation and disadvantage associated with care and family responsibilities.

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