Measure For Measure
Gender Equality in Australia

Summary Document

On Wednesday 4 March, ahead of International Women’s Day, Per Capita will launch a major new report: Measure for Measure: Gender Equality in Australia.

There are many intersecting factors contributing to the gender equality gap in Australia, and various government and non-government agencies engaged in monitoring and addressing them. Yet there is no comprehensive, independent tool by which Australia’s progress towards gender equity is regularly measured.

This groundbreaking report tracks the life cycle of Australian women, from early childhood, through education, employment, unpaid work, parenting and care, to retirement and old age, and identifies the points at which they fall behind men in terms of their social and economic power. It investigates the impact of violence on women’s security and wellbeing, and the unequal treatment women receive in our health system; and looks at the way women are represented in our society, and how they fare in leadership roles.

Australia is one of few developed nations that does not actively set targets for gender equality and measure progress towards nationally agreed goals. As a result, we are falling behind – over the last 12 years, Australia has fallen from a rank of 15th to 44th on the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Index.

Gendered data matters. Regular, transparent reports on performance against an agreed set of indicators is critical if we are to achieve the goal of gender equality. Without accountability, closing the gender gap in Australia and across the globe will remain merely an aspirational goal, rather than an achievable target.

This report looks at why gender equality in Australia is declining, and calls for a national commitment to arrest that decline. It is intended to provide the foundation for a long-term project to produce a national, comprehensive longitudinal study of the progress towards gender equality in Australia.

Snapshot of Australia’s Current International Gender Equality Performance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UN Gender Development Index</th>
<th>UN Gender Inequality Index/Empowerment Measure</th>
<th>SDG Index Report</th>
<th>World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index</th>
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Source: UN Gender Development Index, UN Gender Inequality Index/Empowerment Measure, SDG Index Report, World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index
Gender Equality in Australia Across the Life Course

Early childhood
What happens to girls in early childhood?
- They experience gendered play spaces
- They begin developing gendered appearance
- They interact with gendered toys
- They begin displaying gendered behaviour

Education
What happens to girls at school?
- They stop studying maths & science
  - Only 16% of STEM graduates are women
- They spend three hours a day on social media
- They experience violence
  - 47% of girls feel unsafe walking alone after dark
- They experience gender pay gap
- Women experience a motherhood penalty

Employment
What happens to women at work?
- They work in underpaid feminised industries
- They receive lower award wages than men
- First Nations women experience unique, complex challenges
- They suffer from the rigid structural organisation of work
- Women experience discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace
- If women live with a disability, they are further disadvantaged

Unpaid work: parenting and domestic labour
How does unpaid work affect Australian women?
- Women shoulder a disproportionate load of unpaid domestic labour
  - Australian women spend 80.8% more time on unpaid household work each day than men
- Women spend much more time actively parenting than their male partners
- Women suffer from policy settings that encourage unequal division of unpaid work

Retirement and old age
What happens to Australian women in old age?
- They are more likely to live in poverty
- They are more likely to rely on the age pension
- They retire with significantly less superannuation savings than men
- Women in Australia currently retire with 47% less superannuation than men
- They are more likely to live in housing stress
Health
What happens to women when they seek healthcare?

- Their health concerns may not be acknowledged or recognised
- Their experience of pain may be dismissed as trivial
- They may be exposed to experimental procedures or devices that are poorly researched and understood
- They are at risk of being denied reproductive choice

Representation
How are women represented in the Australian media?

- They are segregated along gender lines by subject matter
- They are often stereotyped by media representation
- There is an under-representation of female characters on screen
- They suffer from “entrenched sexism” in the media’s coverage of sport, and reduce their participation in sport due to gendered judgements on their appearance

Leadership
What is the state of gender equality in leadership?

- There have been too few Australian women heads of state
- The numbers of women Members of Parliament remains low, but is improving slowly
- There are modest improvements in the number of female ministers in the Executive
- Women dominate junior levels of the public service, but remain underrepresented at the executive level
- Australian businesses have a long way to go before achieving gender equality
- There are increasing numbers of women in leadership positions in financial institutions and regulators

Violence Against Women
How do women experience violence in Australia?

- They may experience family violence perpetrated by an intimate partner or other family member
- They are at risk of ‘stranger violence’, such as rape and sexual assault, perpetrated by a non-intimate partner
- 39% of homicides in Australia in 2011-12 were domestic homicides
- They are often stereotyped by media representation
- There is an under-representation of female characters on screen
- They are under-represented in leading creative roles in film and television
- 29.8% of characters in Australian films are female
- They suffer from “entrenched sexism” in the media’s coverage of sport, and reduce their participation in sport due to gendered judgements on their appearance

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The time is now for an annual Australian Gender Equality Report. Ideally, this should be produced by an agency of government, and we call on the federal government to consider establishing such an agency to undertake this work.

In the meantime, there is considerable expertise amongst civil society institutions, academic bodies and other non-government organisations that can be drawn upon to develop a uniquely Australian set of indicators for assessing our progress towards gender equality and creating the basis for a strong annual report.

We hope our work might represent the start of a process to achieve this. By reviewing existing data and research, we have attempted to reveal a potential framework for the production of an annual analysis of Australia's gender equality performance.

It is the intention of the authors to collaborate with researchers and organisations whose work is referenced in this report, in order to address the gaps in gender analysis that we have identified and which are contributing to unequal outcomes for women.

Our hope is that, in time, an "Australian Gender Equality Dashboard" could be digitised and interactive, to engage Australian men and women in an ongoing discussion about gender equality, and to ensure the challenge of eliminating barriers to women's full participation in society are fully understood.

Ultimately, our goal must be an Australia in which women and girls are able to reach their full potential, and to live lives of equal opportunity to men and boys. Nothing less is good enough.

If you are interested in joining a coalition of organisations calling for an Australian Gender Equality Dashboard, please contact us at info@percapita.org.au