

## Case Study: Using the Media

### Timing

Make it easy for journalists to cover your research.

Be aware of events competing for attention.



### Framing

Think about how your work fits in with the priorities of the decision makers in order to show the value of your ideas in the context.



*Good communications are essential if research and analysis are to have an influence.*

### Bringing the analysis to life

*Increase media attention by focusing on a key fact that symbolises a larger problem.*

*Use visual forms, such as graphs and images to make data more accessible.*

*Humanise the issue with personal stories, quotes and case studies.*

### Strategically using different sources of media

*Blogging Podcasts.*

*E-newsletters.*

*Television*

*Think tank newsletters.*

*Newspapers.*

*New media formats.*

*Policy research outlets.*

*Women's media.*



## CASE STUDY 7: USING THE MEDIA

*Monica Costa and Rhonda Sharp<sup>1</sup>*

Good communication is essential if research and analysis are to influence politicians and other policy actors. For your work to get noticed, it's important that policy-makers, civil society groups, and others are aware of the available research and analysis, understand its relevance to their interests, and feel motivated to take action for change. For civil society groups, good communication can help to mobilise support for campaigns, funding and new membership.

The UK Women's Budget Group used their experience as a progressive economics think tank to develop their *Using the Media* case study. Key lessons include:

- *Timing is everything.*
- *Frame your message appropriately.*
- *Bring the analysis to life.*
- *Use of different media sources strategically.*

We illustrate these key lessons for effective media communications with Australian examples relevant to gender-responsive budgeting.

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### Timing is everything

Picking the right time to argue your cause provides a greater opportunity for success. Timing was critical, for example, for a successful 2021 Victorian budget campaign launched by the peak body Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC).

GEN VIC started early developing a budget submission, *2021-22 Towards a Gender Equal Recovery Budget*, as part of a campaign to influence the state government's budget preparation. The budget submission set out, and costed, a policy blueprint to restructure the economy in response to the Covid-19 economic downturn. The submission built on months of consultation with 42 organisations and experts in a variety of fields with the aim of turning the Covid-19 crisis into an opportunity to reform Victoria's economy and public health system.

A suite of investments (\$271.2 million) was proposed, incorporating an improved gender architecture to build the capacity to undertake gender-responsive budgeting within government and civil society. This included an independent expert advisory group on gender equal economics. Further investments included job creation, health services, the care economy, violence prevention, and building community (see GEN VIC social media tile).<sup>2</sup>

Victoria has a **once in a lifetime opportunity to restructure our economy, public health and social support system in ways that benefit everyone.** We're calling for:

- Gender Equal Job Creation
- Gender Responsive Budgeting Architecture
- Boosted Women's Health Services
- Strengthened Gender Equal Communities and
- A valued and prepared Care Economy.

**We've got gender equal solutions for gendered problems. Read our submission today.**

**G+V** #GenderEqualRecovery  
**GENVIC** #TowardsGE #Credible Women

GEN VIC Facebook 19 May 2021

The launch of GEN VIC’s budget submission coincided with a national gender equality debate that received significant media attention. The interest on gender equality was fuelled by a backlash caused by the failure of the federal government’s October 2020 budget to address the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women. In addition, in early 2021, harassment and violence against women was given prominence in the media after several scandals in federal parliament. The media attention created a space for discussing the systemic nature of gender inequality and the importance of the budget.

In this political context, a campaign was developed to lift the profile of GEN VIC’s budget claims. It included a coordinated social media approach with artistic tiles, a presence on X (formerly Twitter) and public events. A timely event was GEN VIC’s pre-budget breakfast which drew attention to gender equality on the day that the state government announced its budget (see Case Study 9).

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## Framing

Framing is about providing a focus for the story you are trying to tell with your analysis and campaigning. It gives your narrative structure and coherence. For example, a report into the impact of spending on health could use a number of different frames, depending on what the author wanted to emphasise:

- *an example of how gender-responsive budgeting helps the government improve its policy-making*
- *a criticism of the government for not spending enough*
- *acknowledging the progress the government has made*
- *a piece of research*
- *a way of sharing the voices of women*
- *the success of a campaign for change.*

Framing that fits in with the priorities of decision-makers can help them engage with the analysis or campaign. During the 1980s and 1990s women and welfare groups in Australia framed much of their work around women’s poverty and the government’s commitment to end child poverty. It was argued that ending child poverty meant tackling women’s poverty: children were poor because their mothers were poor.

Australian and international evidence was used to highlight the fact that money paid directly to mothers was more likely to be spent on children than money paid to fathers. This helped persuade the government that child payments should increase and be paid to the main carer, usually the mother, in order to reduce child poverty.

Acknowledging progress can provide a useful frame for furthering engagement with the government. Following the launch of the 2021 state budget, GEN VIC provided a budget scorecard (see tile), concluding that the government had demonstrated an appreciation of the need to address the impact of the pandemic on women. Ticks were given to gender equal jobs creation, care, health and gender-responsive budgeting architecture, which offered ‘promise in the march towards a Gender Equal Recovery’ from the effects of the pandemic.<sup>3</sup>

**How did the Victorian Budget measure up for Gender Equality?**

- Gender Equal Job Creation**  
47,000+ jobs in caring industries such as early childhood, mental health, COVID-19 response and teaching. Funding for TAFE and for rural women's employment.
- Imagine a Care Economy**  
Key investments made throughout the budget in mental health, early childhood, COVID-19 healthcare, teaching and aged-care
- Boosting Women's Health Services**  
Increased funding to Women's Health Services as well as \$4.1M funding to establish new women's health funds, \$70M for public IVF.
- Gender Responsive Budgeting Architecture**  
Funds to establish a Gender Responsive Budgeting Unit to ensure outcomes for women are measured in budget decision-making processes.
- Gender and Disaster Workforce**  
Still yet to see specific funding for a gender and disaster workforce to assist in preventing gendered effects of disaster, despite focus on bushfire recovery.
- Strengthening our Gender Equal Communities**  
Increased funding for Victoria's creative industries, of which women and gender diverse people hardest hit. But specific funding for gender equity to be seen.

**G+V GEN VIC**

GEN VIC (2021)<sup>4</sup>

Choosing a single frame can reduce the complexity of issues and leave the priorities of decision-makers unchallenged. For example, in the case described above, the framing of government spending for women as a way to care for children ignores women’s economic autonomy and intra-household inequality as issues in their own right and reinforces assumptions of women’s roles as mothers.

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## Bringing the analysis to life

Those engaged in gender-responsive budgeting are aware that being able to quantify impact with numbers and statistics increases media interest in their work. Consideration needs to be given to maintaining the focus on key messages in the midst of large amounts of statistical data.

A number of tactics can be used to bring the numbers to life, including:

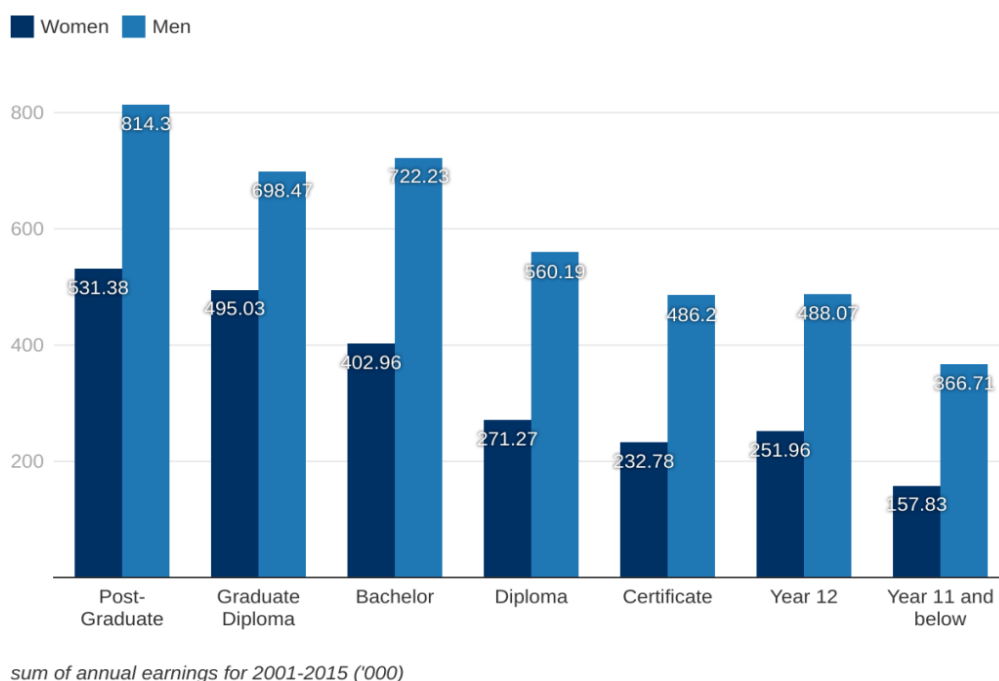
- *Displaying information in graph form to illustrate trends, distribution patterns and impacts*

As part of our research project on retirement incomes, we provided Briefing Notes to federal Treasury and the Office for Women that sought to identify key economic relationships in gender outcomes in retirement.

One issue covered was the link between education and long-term earnings. Our analysis used 15 years of Housing, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) data to provide a guide for lifetime earnings.

The graph (below) shows women with higher levels of qualification earn more over the long-term than those with lower levels of education. For example, the median long-term earnings of women with a postgraduate qualification is close to \$300,000 or 128% higher than the earnings of those with a TAFE certificate.

Significantly, educational qualifications do not raise women's long-term earnings to levels equal to those of men. Troublingly, the median total gross 15 year earnings of women with a Bachelor degree is actually lower than that attained by men with Year 12 qualifications.



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**Figure 7.1 Median long-term earnings of Australian women and men, by educational category<sup>5</sup>**

- *Focussing on a key fact that symbolises a larger problem*

A YWCA report into regional women's housing needs and challenges included many indicators. To communicate the findings of the report, the YWCA developed social media tiles focusing on a key number to illustrate the gendered nature and dimension of the housing problem.<sup>6</sup>



YWCA (2020)<sup>7</sup>

- *Using related data on a topic in the form of an infographic*

The statutory authority, the Workforce Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), produces an annual scorecard on a series of labour market indicators for private and non-governmental sectors. It uses data from an annual employer census of private sector and medium size employers. The 2022-23 employer census captured data from more than 5,000 employers and covering over 4.8 million employees. It highlights the relationship between key gender issues in the labour market together with statistical data and progress on policy actions.

# Workplace gender equality in Australia

Click on a tile below to find the answer to the question.

**What is the current gender pay gap?**

21.7% gender pay gap

\$1 Man

78c Women

**Why did the gender pay gap reduce?**

**How many women are CEOs?**

63% of employers offer employer-funded paid parental leave, 1/3 of them offer it universally\*

**Has the proportion of men taking parental leave increased?**

Workplace Gender Equality Agency (2023)

Workplace gender equality in Australia interactive infographic

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## Case studies, quotes and personal stories

Print and broadcast media are more likely to run stories about reports if they can focus on one or two individual case studies. This can risk making the structural nature of the problem invisible (see Case Study 6, Dead Women Count campaign).

Individual stories can help to bring statistics and analysis to life by making a problem relatable. Personal stories can humanise a policy problem and highlight how a change in policy settings can have many, often unintended, consequences.

Quotes and personal stories of women featured in the YWCA National Housing's report into regional women's housing needs. These personal stories were collected through focus groups. They complemented quantitative data analysis with women's rich and nuanced experiences of homelessness, and unsafe and insecure housing. The YWCA's National Housing campaign used these personal stories as part of a social media strategy (#YWCAHousingResearch #WomensHousing #WomensRegionalHousing).



YWCA (2020)<sup>8</sup>

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### Strategic use of different media

A diverse array of media channels and formats can be used to communicate your research and analysis. These include traditional media (newspapers, television and radio), social media, new media formats, women's media outlets, websites, podcasts, videos, and many others.

It is important to be clear about who you are trying to influence and mobilise, including understanding the media channels and formats that are likely to get you noticed.

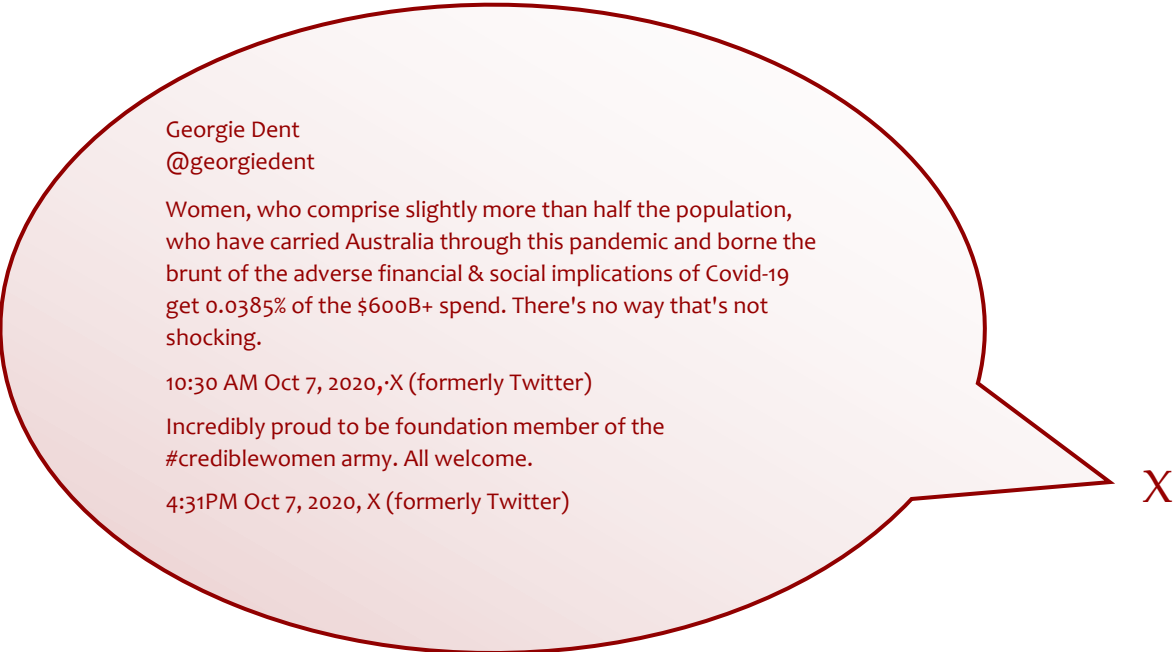
Social media, for example, has been used to communicate gender-responsive budgeting messages by both civil society and government. Live-postings are used during significant parliamentary debates, commenting on the speeches made, and sharing relevant key facts from research. Trending hashtags and handles of journalists and politicians are used to draw attention to responses and make journalists aware that you are available for comment.



A strategic use of social media was the online mobilisation around #crediblewomen. On the night of the 2020-2021 federal budget announcement, the think tank, Per Capita, estimated that budget allocations in the government’s *Women’s Economic Security Statement* amounted to 0.038% of the total budget. This was published online in the *Women’s Agenda* by the executive director of The ParentHood and shared widely (see below).

Prime Minister Scott Morrison’s Office was swift to dispute this assessment claiming that ‘nothing in the budget is gendered’ and stating that ‘no one credible’ would agree with this assessment.<sup>9</sup> Overnight, #crediblewomen gained wide social media and media coverage. Coverage of the budget highlighted the fact that the government had a limited understanding of the gendered impacts of the budget, with a focus on gender specific/targeted and small allocations.

The budget became a symbol of how the disproportionately negative impact on women of the Covid-19 pandemic was being inadequately addressed.



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## Notes, Case study 7

<sup>1</sup> Costa, M., & Sharp, R. (2024). Using the media. *Women Count Australia: A Casebook for Gender-responsive Budgeting*.

We would like to thank Mary-Ann Stephenson, author of Using the media. In UK Women's Budget Group. (2018). [Women Count: A Casebook for Gender-responsive Budgeting Groups](#). United Kingdom.

<sup>2</sup> Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC). (2021). [Towards a gender equal recovery 2021/2022. Submission to the 2021-2022 Victorian State Budget](#). Melbourne, GEN VIC.

<sup>3</sup> GEN VIC. (2021). [State budget shows promise in the march towards a Gender Equal Recovery](#). Media Release, 20 May. Melbourne, GEN VIC.

<sup>4</sup> GEN VIC. (2021). *Ibid*.

<sup>5</sup> Austen, S., Mavisakalyan, A., Sharp, R. & Costa, M. (2017). [Long-term earnings and education](#). Briefing Note 1: Inside the Black box – Intra-household resource allocations of older couples. [Women in Social and Economic Research](#). Perth, Curtin University of Technology.

<sup>6</sup> YWCA National Housing. (2020a). [Women's housing needs in regional Australia](#). Melbourne, Victoria: YWCA National Housing.

<sup>7</sup> YWCA National Housing. (2020b). [Women's housing needs in regional Australia](#). Social media.

<sup>8</sup> YWCA National Housing. (2020a). *Op. cit.*, viii.

<sup>9</sup> Crabb, A. (2020). [Can a budget shaped by male leaders hope to deliver for the women hit hardest by this recession?](#) Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). (10 October).