

# Impact Case Study

## Gender Responsive Budgeting

### Introduction and background

Economics researcher Dr Leonora Risse has long been exploring gender inequality in economic outcomes as part of her specialisation in applied economics. With a background in public policymaking, Dr Risse focuses on converting academic research into practical policy action.

Through her ongoing research into evidence-based strategies to achieve gender equality, Dr Risse identified the value of applying a 'gender lens' to economic policy. Formally, this practice is known as Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in economic policymaking.

GRB is the process of analysing the impacts of a given policy through a gender lens. Even when a policy appears gender neutral, GRB examines how government expenditure decisions and tax revenue settings can affect men and women in different ways. The potential for GRB to promote more robust policymaking – leading to the design of gender equitable policies and more equitable economic outcomes – is described in Chapter 1 of *Fiscal Policies and Gender Equality*, published in 2018 by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Point 18 of IMF's *Pursuing Women's Economic Empowerment* describes the strategy further.

*"Fiscal policy design and budget systems can also play a large role in reducing gender inequality. Fiscal authorities can ensure that tax and spending policies and/or public financial management instruments address gender inequality and the advancement of women in areas such as education, health, and economic empowerment ..."*

*The approach is called gender-sensitive or gender-responsive budgeting. If designed well, gender budgeting can improve the efficiency and equity of the overall budget process. Fiscal authorities at any level of government can assess the needs of boys and girls and men and women; identify key outcomes or goals; plan, allocate, and distribute public funds; and monitor and evaluate achievements."*

### The research

Dr Risse conducted a review of existing literature on what policies were the most effective in facilitating gender equality, also drawing on her experiences in public policymaking as a Senior Research Economist for the Australian Government Productivity Commission. Dr Risse has submitted her findings to Australian Government economic inquiries.

Applying the concept of GRB in practice, Dr Risse also analysed the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Australian and Victorian workforce through a gender lens, using Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data. With co-author, Dr Angela Jackson of Equity Economics, Dr Risse published "A gender lens on the workforce impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia" in the *Australian Journal of Labour Economics* in 2021.

- <https://research.curtin.edu.au/businesslaw/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2021/10/AJLE242risse.pdf>

Dr Risse's connections with industry and community groups also gave her an opportunity to provide an example of GRB analysis of the Queensland State Budget. The report, prepared for Queensland Council of Social Services (QCOSS), provided data-driven evidence to support their advocacy for the implementation of GRB in Queensland.

- <https://www.qcoss.org.au/publication/report-gender-impact-analysis-of-the-qld-budget-2021-2022/>

Over the last two years, Dr Risse has also contributed the Fiscal Policy chapter for the annual Gender Lens on the Budget by the National Foundation for Australian Women (NFAW), which analyses the predicted effects of the Australian Government's Budget announcements on women's economic outcomes and opportunities.

—  
**What's next...**

## Institutional support

---

RMIT supported the Women in Economics Network (WEN) to host the Australian Gender Economics Workshop in 2019, where Dr Risse designed and convened a Gender Lensing Masterclass.

- <https://sites.rmit.edu.au/agew2019/>

The AGEW2019 event report is available at:

- <https://cpb-ap-se2.wpmucdn.com/sites.rmit.edu.au/dist/a/142/files/2020/01/AGEW2019-Event-Report.pdf>

RMIT also supported Dr Risse's broader research on gender equality through the award of a Vice-Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellowship from 2017 to 2019. This enabled Dr Risse to spend time in residence at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government as a Research Fellow with the Women and Public Policy Program. This program brought together gender equality scholars from around the world to exchange and foster new insights on practical ways to address gender inequalities.

## Project outcomes

---

In 2019 and 2020, Dr Risse co-authored two submissions on how Gender Responsive Budgeting could be implemented at State and Federal levels: one to the Victorian Government's Department of Treasury and Finance; the other to the Australian Government's Parliamentary Budget Office.

Dr Risse has also written the following reports which collated evidence-based research and data to inform the government policy design, aimed at supporting a gender equitable economic recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- 'Gender equity as a driver of growth: Policies for an inclusive economic recovery for Victoria', Report for Equal Workplaces Advisory Council, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victoria Government, Co-authored with Angela Jackson, Equity Economics (2020)
- 'Evidence-based steps towards economic equity for Victorian women: An analytical report to support the Victorian Inquiry', Inquiry into Economic Equity for Victorian Women, Department of Treasury and Finance, Victorian Government (2021)
- 'What more does the Victorian Budget need for an inclusive recovery', Report for Equal Workplaces Advisory Council, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victoria Government, Co-authored with Angela Jackson, Equity Economics (2021).

## Overview of the impact

---

The findings of the GRB research project have contributed to Dr Risse's ongoing work on gender equality and economics. They have also influenced changes in legislation and policy in Victoria. In the 2021-22 Victorian State Budget, the Victorian Government announced it would establish a Gender Responsive Budgeting Unit in Department of Treasury and Finance – as recommended in Dr Risse's submission.

The GRB Unit is expected to assess the impact of economic policies on both men and women and to evaluate whether they have disproportionate impacts for one gender relative to the other, with further goals to incorporate an intersectional lens and beyond binary classifications of gender.

This analysis will influence the development and implementation of the State's economic policies.

## Next steps

---

Dr Risse is continuing her work on examining economics through a gender lens, to support the creation of more equitable economic policies.