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**MEDIA RELEASE** For immediate distribution

## **Gender Equality and COVID-19 - Joint Statement**

Gippsland Women's Health is deeply concerned about the cumulative impact of disasters on women, particularly in East Gippsland communities, after drought, fire and now the COVID-19 pandemic. The complexity of what is unfolding in Gippsland is unprecedented, with rural and remote communities already severely disadvantaged.

Together with over 50 organisations committed to gender equity and women across Victoria, Gippsland Women's Health has endorsed the Gender Equity Victoria initiative calling for State and Federal Governments to recognise the gendered impacts of COVID-19. Women's roles are fundamental to keeping our communities safe and functioning and it is important to recognise the increasing pressure on women. Gippsland Women's Health supports this joint statement and continues to work towards gender equitable responses to the pandemic.

The Joint Statement includes **Ten Things Governments Should Do Now** to ensure a gender lens on pandemic response and recovery. (*Summary*)

1. Fund Gender & Disaster Workers across the State of Victoria
2. Protect obstetric, gynaecological, sexual and reproductive health services from COVID-19
3. Boost family violence prevention and response activities to cope with an increased demand
4. Ensure all COVID-19 Updates & communications and data gathering applies a gender lens.
5. Provide a wage subsidy to all workers in hard hit industries, including casual women workers.
6. Provide recognition and support to carers & educators at home.
7. Provide essential service workers with urgent Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and recognition of the risky work they are performing.
8. All essential workers should also have childcare funded by the Commonwealth for the duration of the pandemic.
9. Commence gender-based planning for post-pandemic reboot of the Victorian economy. Create a Pandemic Stand-down Taskforce to prioritise investment in services & infrastructure required to ensure Victoria gets back on its feet swiftly. Ensure decision making is gender equal.
10. Get gender equality investment Back on Track. Ensure that all rebuild efforts and investment apply a gender lens so that women and men benefit equally from the long journey towards recovery.

Download full [Joint Statement](#)

We know that family violence risk increases in times of disaster. Please note that **agencies are still providing safety and support services and are available for contact**. If you or someone you know is impacted by sexual assault or family violence please call Safe Steps 1800 015 188 (Victorian's Family Violence Response Centre) [www.safesteps.org.au](http://www.safesteps.org.au) or 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 (National Sexual Assault Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service [www.1800RESPECT.org.au](http://www.1800RESPECT.org.au)). **In an emergency always call 000.**

Please refer to our Gippsland Stop Family Violence card for more support services on [www.gwhealth.asn.au](http://www.gwhealth.asn.au)



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