

**Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024**

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## INQUIRY INTO THE QUEENSLAND PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION BILL 2024 SUBMISSION FROM SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL BRISBANE INC

TO: **The Committee Secretariat**  
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### INTRODUCTION

- This submission is presented by **Soroptimist International of Brisbane Inc (SI Brisbane)**, a volunteer-based organization dedicated to advocating for gender equality and the well-being of women and girls. Our membership comprises business, community, and professional women committed to supporting the interests of all women and girls.
- As part of the global advocacy network Soroptimist International (SI), our approximately 66,000 members in 118 countries work at local, national, and international levels to educate, empower, and enable opportunities for women and girls. Established over a century ago, SI has grown into a global organization whose mission aligns with **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, which focuses on achieving gender equality** (UN Women, 2023).
- **SI Brisbane aims to highlight the potential impacts of the Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024 on women and girls.** While the Bill seeks to establish the Queensland Productivity Commission as an independent statutory body designed to enhance productivity and economic performance, it is crucial to assess its potential implications on gender equality and the well-being of women and girls in Queensland.

### KEY ISSUES AND THEIR IMPACT

1. **Economic Participation and Employment**  
The Bill's emphasis on enhancing productivity and economic performance may have significant implications for women's employment opportunities. Women, particularly those from marginalized communities, often face barriers such as gender biases in hiring, wage disparities, and limited career advancement opportunities (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023). It is essential that the Commission's efforts actively promote equal access to employment opportunities for women.

Gender-responsive strategies should be employed to address structural inequities in the workforce, particularly in areas where women are underrepresented, such as leadership roles, STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) fields, and high-growth industries (Sorooptimist International, 2023).

## **2. Regulatory Matters**

The Queensland Productivity Commission will play a leading role in regulating and reviewing various sectors, which could directly influence policies on gender equality, including issues such as workplace discrimination, gender-based violence, and unequal pay (Australian Department of Social Services, 2024). As part of its regulatory framework, the Commission must ensure that its oversight includes a gender lens in assessing policies, laws, and regulations. This would entail addressing gaps in existing regulations, such as pay equity, sexual harassment, and access to support for women facing workplace discrimination and violence (Australian Department of Social Services, 2024).

## **3. Access to Information**

The Bill grants the Commission the power to request data and information from government agencies, which presents an important opportunity for gathering gender-disaggregated data. Such data is essential for understanding disparities between women and men in areas such as employment, education, and healthcare (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2024). Access to gender-disaggregated data will enable the Commission to make informed recommendations that specifically address the needs of women and girls, helping shape more effective and targeted policies to promote gender equality (Sorooptimist International, 2023).

## **4. Privacy and Confidentiality**

While the Bill enables the disclosure of personal information by the Commission, there must be careful consideration of privacy protections, especially regarding women's personal data. Given the risks of data misuse and the potential harm in sensitive cases, such as gender-based violence, robust privacy safeguards should be implemented. This includes anonymizing personal information where possible and ensuring women's confidentiality rights are respected at all stages of data collection and usage (Australian Department of Social Services, 2024).

## **5. Public Consultation**

The Bill mandates public consultation for inquiries, providing an opportunity for diverse voices to be heard. However, for these consultations to be truly inclusive, women and girls must be actively encouraged and supported to participate. This can be achieved through targeted outreach and accessible consultation platforms that facilitate meaningful engagement (Office for Women, Queensland Government, 2024). Ensuring that the consultation process is welcoming to women, particularly First Nations people, those with disabilities, individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, and residents of rural, remote, and regional areas, will ensure their perspectives are fully represented (Queensland Government, 2024).

## **6. Social and Economic Issues**

The Commission is empowered to research and advise on various social and economic issues. While the Bill includes provisions for reviewing productivity and economic performance, it is crucial that issues specifically affecting women, such as gender-based violence, sexual harassment, unequal pay, and access to healthcare, are explicitly prioritized in the Commission's research agenda (Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, 2023). Addressing these issues not only benefits women and girls but also contributes to a more robust and equitable economy by fostering a healthier, more productive population (World Economic Forum, 2024).

## **OUR RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. Gender-inclusive and Responsive Policies**

All policies and recommendations developed by the Queensland Productivity Commission must be gender-inclusive. This means ensuring that women and girls have equal access to economic opportunities; while also recognizing and addressing the unique challenges they face in areas such as health, education, and safety. The Commission's work should explicitly account for these challenges and seek to eliminate the barriers to full participation that women and girls experience (Sorooptimist International, 2024).

### **2. Promote Equal Employment Opportunities**

The Commission must take proactive steps to eliminate gender biases in hiring and promotion practices within its structure and across the broader Queensland workforce. This includes supporting the implementation of gender

equality indicators, transparent reporting on gender diversity in hiring practices, and programs that encourage women to enter and advance in high-growth sectors like technology, science, and leadership roles (Queensland Office for Women, 2022).

### 3. **Data Collection and Analysis**

The Commission should prioritize the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data to inform decision-making processes. This includes disaggregating data on employment, income, health outcomes, education, and gender-based violence. Such data will provide a clearer picture of gender disparities and enable the development of targeted interventions that support women and girls across all sectors (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2024).

### 4. **Strengthen Privacy Protections**

Provisions for disclosing personal information must adhere to the highest standards of privacy protection. Given the sensitive nature of data related to women, particularly concerning gender-based violence and sexual harassment, the Bill should establish clear protocols to safeguard women's personal information. This includes robust data anonymization practices and ensuring that personal data is only shared with the explicit consent of the individual or in situations where there is no risk of harm to their safety or well-being (Australian Department of Social Services, 2024).

### 5. **Inclusive Public Consultation**

To ensure that public consultations are truly inclusive, the Commission should actively encourage the participation of women and girls from diverse backgrounds. Special efforts should be made to reach underrepresented groups, such as women with disabilities, Indigenous women, those from diverse cultural backgrounds, and those living in remote or rural areas. Additionally, consultations should be conducted in accessible formats, including language assistance and online platforms, to allow greater accessibility for all women and girls (Queensland Office for Women, 2024).

### 6. **Prioritization of Gender-Specific Issues**

We recommend that the Queensland Productivity Commission explicitly prioritize research and policy recommendations related to gender-specific social and economic issues. These include addressing the root causes of gender-based violence, closing the gender pay gap, expanding access to affordable childcare and eldercare, and improving healthcare services for women and girls (Soroptimist International, 2023; UN Women, 2023). These issues are fundamental not only to the well-being of women but also to the overall economic and social health of Queensland.

## **CONCLUSION**

- The Queensland Productivity Commission Bill 2024 offers a vital opportunity to drive economic growth and enhance productivity in Queensland. To ensure this growth is sustainable and equitable, gender equality must be central to the Commission's mandate and operations. Without addressing gender equality, the Bill risks reinforcing existing disparities that limit the participation of women and girls in the economy.
- Incorporating gender equality into the Commission's framework will empower women and girls to thrive and actively participate in economic policies designed to enhance their well-being. This aligns with commitments under SDG 5 (Gender Equality). By implementing the recommendations in this submission, the Commission can promote both economic performance and social equity, ensuring that the contributions of women are fully realized.
- A truly inclusive economy benefits all Queenslanders, regardless of gender, by recognizing and addressing the barriers to equality. By adopting a forward-thinking approach, the Queensland Productivity Commission can play a crucial role in fostering a more just, prosperous, and equitable society for future generations.

Soroptimist International Brisbane Inc



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