

EQUITABLE FOUNDATIONS

Case Studies of Gender-wise Philanthropy in Housing Partnerships



**AUSTRALIANS
INVESTING IN
WOMEN**

Empowering giving for a fairer future



Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the unceded lands on which we work, learn and live, and recognise the unique place held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original owners and custodians of the lands, skies and waterways of the Australian continent.

Acknowledgments:

We sincerely thank all of the participants who gave their time, expertise and wisdom to participate in research and the organisations in the partnership that made Viv's Place and My Home a reality.

We also thank members of the project's Expert Reference Group (refer to page 29 for names).

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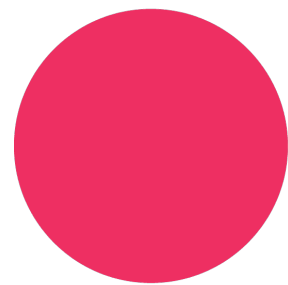
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The use of inclusive language in this document:

When this document refers to 'woman/women' or 'man/men' it refers to people who identify that way; this includes transgender people, cisgender people, and others who identify themselves as woman or man. This document also uses the term 'gender diverse people', who may identify as non-binary, trans, agender, genderqueer, genderfluid or with any other relevant term.

What's in this report?

- 2 Foreword**
- 3 Executive summary and overview**
- 6 Definitions and concepts**
- 7 Project rationale**
- 8 Introducing the Framework**
 - 9 How did we choose the two case partnerships to study?
 - 10 How did we seek answers to our questions?
- 11 Our findings**
- 12 Case Study: Viv's Place**
 - 12 The story of Viv's Place
 - 13 Core features summary of Viv's Place
 - 14 Process and stages of the Viv's Place partnership
- 16 Case Study: My Home**
 - 16 The story of My Home
 - 17 Core features summary of My Home
 - 18 Process and stages of the My Home partnership
- 20 Snapshot: Comparing and contrasting insights from the two cases**
- 22 What have we learned?**
 - 24 What makes for a valuable partnership including a gender lens?
 - 26 What causes problems?
- 27 Proven practices**
- 28 Where to next?**
- 28 Additional resources and further information**
- 29 References cited in this report**
- 30 Who undertook this study?**



Foreword



Modern philanthropy is increasingly seeking to solve long-standing societal issues through innovation and partnerships. By investing in pilot projects, establishing proof points and presenting tested and proven approaches, effective initiatives can be adopted at scale by government or other investors.

Recognising and understanding the different needs and experiences of any population or specific target group leads to more effective and sustainable interventions, particularly for those experiencing disadvantage. By considering gender-specific challenges and opportunities, philanthropic initiatives can be better tailored to address the issues and meet the needs of the communities they aim to serve.

With support from the Paul Ramsay Foundation, Australians Investing In Women has collaborated with the University of Melbourne's Social Equity Institute (MSEI) to develop an evidence-informed resource, supporting the application of a gender lens in philanthropic partnerships.

In deciding on the most appropriate case study focus to inform the development of the preliminary Framework, *Equitable Foundations: A Framework for Gender-wise Philanthropy in Partnerships*, the decision to focus on housing was a logical one.

In 2022, AIW invested in a compelling research report produced by Per Capita: *A Home Of One's Own: Philanthropic and social sector solutions for women's housing*, which clearly illustrates that housing insecurity and homelessness in Australia are gendered problems.

The housing crisis is one of the most urgent challenges facing Australian society today – and is one with evident

gender dimensions. Finding and funding effective solutions will require significant investment by multiple sources, a willingness to work together with stakeholders, and to embrace innovation.

Examining two gender-focused housing case studies has provided rich inputs for our Framework and we thank the team at MSEI for their valuable contribution to this work. The case study report makes clear that a gender lens is a helpful tool in understanding and responding effectively to any issue – and the housing crisis is no exception.

Organisations with shared values, are more likely to build successful partnerships and networks with like-minded entities. Collaboration with other philanthropic organisations, government agencies, investors, and grassroots movements focused on gender issues can further amplify the success and impact of interventions.

Incorporating a gender lens in philanthropic partnerships is not just a matter of social justice; it is a strategic approach that recognises the interconnectedness of gender with broader social and economic development. By understanding and addressing gender-specific challenges, philanthropic initiatives are better positioned to successfully influence more sustainable and inclusive outcomes for the entire population.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Reilly".

Julie Reilly OAM
CEO, Australians Investing In Women



The lenses through which we view the world affect what we prioritise, who we see and what levers we pull to create positive change. Increasingly, such change relies on partnerships and collaboration to bring the best combination of resources, experience and will to solving wicked problems. Thus, having the tools to work in partnership in the application of specific lenses in philanthropic giving is increasingly needed. Melbourne Social Equity Institute (MSEI) is very pleased to have contributed to AIIW's work in supporting the philanthropic sector's practices in gender-aware giving.

The case for gender equality and its benefits for the wellbeing of our planet, our societies and our economies has been comprehensively made. Evidence overwhelmingly indicates that, among other benefits, improving gender equity is a key lever to reduce poverty and disadvantage. Yet, gender inequities and their related problems remain substantial and entrenched. Knowing what is wrong and doing what is better is not always as simple as understanding the facts and figures of a problem. In-depth case research such as that informing this Framework and report helps us to understand not just what the problem is, but how it is being tackled in practice, what contextual factors matter and what we can learn from both the process and outcomes of this work. An iterative process of sensemaking between what the researchers found and what AIIW and other practice experts know has also supported the development of resources we hope you can practically apply in a variety of philanthropic contexts and to a myriad of issues.

This project has itself been a partnership between Australians Investing In Women and Melbourne Social Equity Institute, with generous support from Paul Ramsay Foundation. We have all learned something new about ourselves and each other in working together. MSEI's research is typically a joint undertaking with the people and organisations the knowledge seeks to serve. Our thanks to those who have shared their experience and insights to inform the Framework and case studies presented, and our gratitude to those of you who use these resources in support of a fairer world.

Professor Jo Barraket AM
Director, Melbourne Social Equity Institute, University of Melbourne

Executive Summary



Australia's philanthropic sector (mostly comprising trusts and foundations) is experiencing growth both in terms of the number of participants and the size of their assets (McGregor-Lowndes et al., 2023). This is supporting a shift toward more extensive and more substantial collaborations with the potential for greater impact.

In 2023, with funding from Paul Ramsay Foundation, Australians Investing In Women (AIW) in partnership with Melbourne Social Equity Institute (MSEI), examined whether and how gender-focused perspectives are applied within philanthropic partnerships and collaborative efforts of the sector. The purpose of this research was to generate practical insights about how gender-focused work is practised and might be extended in philanthropic partnerships.

The initial goal of this project is to provide exemplar models and a Framework to guide philanthropic funders in incorporating a gender lens, or gender equity principles, into their partnerships with other funders, including governmental and private entities.

The research centres on two case studies of philanthropic funding for long-term housing that considered the particular needs and experiences of women. Both cases represent groundbreaking Australian models with their innovations encompassing both the construction of new housing and collaborative funding from various stakeholders including State and local governments, private sector in-kind support, community service clubs, and nonprofit organisations.

- One case study is Viv's Place, an apartment building in Melbourne, Victoria that is home to 60 families. These families include single mothers and their children who have experienced family or domestic violence. The approximate cost of the construction and fit out was \$31 million.
- The other case study is My Home, a complex of 18 very small prefabricated homes in Fremantle, Western Australia. These prefabricated houses are now permanent homes to single women over 55 years old. The approximate cost of the construction and fit out was \$3 million.

Both housing projects provide safe and secure homes for women who had experience of multiple and intersecting forms of disadvantage during their lives.

We also drew on the knowledge of an Expert Reference Group (ERG) of key people in the philanthropic, housing and women's sectors to test and refine our findings.

“Gender equity lifts everyone. Women’s rights and society’s health and wealth rise together.”

MELINDA FRENCH GATES, CO-FOUNDER,
BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

What we learned

Key insights regarding the application of a gender lens in the partnerships we examined are:

- Organisations adopted a gender lens in their practices, even though they didn’t always recognise or label the use of a gender lens.
- While a shared understanding of a gender lens and terminology may evolve and become more explicit during the course of the partnership, a clear commitment to gender equity upfront is valuable.
- For a gender lens to be successfully applied, it needs to be championed, encouraged and demonstrated.
- Full application of a gender lens is most successful when there is support at board level through a directed policy and/or strategic position for the organisations in the partnership.
- An effective application of a gender lens requires recognising people not only as disadvantaged by gender, but also as complex humans who are accomplished and able to shape their own futures.

This report, and the accompanying Framework, represent the outputs of the project. These resources aim to facilitate the integration of a gender lens into more diverse collaborations involving multiple stakeholders, including service providers, in-kind supporters, and direct funders.

Throughout the report, we **directly quote** some of the light bulb, ah-ha, pivotal moments as described by participants in the interviews. We also quote reflections that made people smile, and ideas that made real change suddenly seem possible.

“Informed by case studies and broader sector expertise, the Framework draws on lived experience in women’s housing, mapping out principles and paths forward that can be applied to collaborations seeking to impact any social issue.”

JULIE REILLY OAM, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, AUSTRALIANS INVESTING IN WOMEN

Definitions and concepts

Collaboration

“A process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited version of what is possible” (Gray, 1989, p.5).

Evaluation

The systematic collection and analysis of information to make judgements, usually about the effectiveness, efficiency and/or appropriateness of an activity.

Gender

The concept of gender is not binary but encompasses a range of gender identities. It refers to our different socially constructed roles, our behaviours, our activities, the way we relate, share resources, make decisions, plan for the future and participate in our community. It is different from “sex”, which merely defines us in a biological and physiological way.

Gender analysis

The critical examination of how differences in gender roles, activities, needs, opportunities and rights/entitlements affect women, men, girls, boys and gender diverse people in a given policy area, situation or context.

Gender diversity

Some older definitions of gender equality and analysis did not explicitly consider gender beyond the binary of men and women, boys and girls. However, gender inequality affects all genders. Women experience inequality and disadvantage in almost all aspects of life including employment, gender pay gap, sexual harassment, unequal caring responsibilities and family violence. Men suffer the impact of harmful gender stereotypes that encourage aggression and discourage help-seeking behaviours. Gender diverse and transgender people experience higher rates of violence and discrimination than women or men.

Gender equality

Gender equality occurs when people of all genders enjoy the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities. Gender equality does not mean that people with different gender identities will become the same. It means that someone’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born, or identify as, female, male or another gender identity (Queensland Government, 2018).

Gender Impact Assessment

A Gender Impact Assessment is a specific tool for gender analysis often used to assess the gender impact of public policies, programs and investments.

Gender lens

The deliberate and critical consideration of the unique experiences and needs of people of different genders, and the drivers of those experiences. The application of a gender lens aims to develop strategies and practices to address and redress gendered norms, structures and power imbalances. A gender lens is an entry point for inquiry into the ways that discrimination and inequalities intersect and compound with different social identities. For the purposes of this report, including the development of the accompanying Framework, the gender lens is intended to address gender inequality for women.

Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is the process of integrating a gender lens into all aspects of an organisation’s strategies and initiatives, and into its culture, systems and operations.

Housing

Housing refers to the buildings in which people live that give shelter and safety, as well as provide a place to rest and to keep belongings. Housing is habitable year-round, and provides a residential address for the individuals or groups who dwell there.

Intersectionality

We know that a gender lens is one way to consider and understand disadvantage and discrimination. Intersectionality is a term that is used to describe how other forms of social disadvantage and discrimination intersect, and compound. It is “the interconnected nature of different characteristics and circumstances such as race, income, class, disability, sexuality and gender as they apply to a given individual or group. These characteristics and circumstances overlap and create an interdependent system of discrimination or disadvantage” (Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2023).

Partnerships

Joint working arrangements between two or more organisations (at least one of which is a philanthropic funder) that remain autonomous while engaging in ongoing, coordinated collective action to achieve outcomes that could not be achieved on their own (adapted from Cornforth et al., 2015, p.777).

Philanthropy

Philanthropy is broadly defined as giving private resources for public or community benefit. Resources commonly refers to money, but may also include time and expertise.

Project rationale



As a \$13.4 billion sector (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2023), philanthropy has enormous potential to contribute to gender equality directly through funding of programs and indirectly through broader leadership, partnership and engagement.

A gender lens on philanthropic partnerships and collaborations is a key strategy to accelerate progress and aligns with the Federal Government's increased focus on gender equality in budget allocation and policy. At the same time, the Federal Government has indicated an explicit commitment to gender equality through the 2023 Women's Budget Statement, the establishment of the Women's Economic Equality Taskforce and through development of the National Gender Equality Strategy.

Internationally, the Global Gender Fund has been formed through a partnership of leading global philanthropists who recognise that gender equality (United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5) is essential to the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Yet few funders apply a gender lens to challenge assumptions that the needs of women and girls and the solutions required are the same as for men and boys.

We undertook this research to better understand the way philanthropic funders consider and apply a gender lens (specifically the needs of women and girls) in their work and to translate our findings into practical resources. This resulting report and the Framework we developed can serve to guide funders through the application of a gender lens to increase their impact.

While in this research, applying a gender lens resulted in funding that addressed the needs of women and girls, at other times and in other circumstances it may also mean funding for transgender and gender diverse people, or in some contexts, funding men and boys.

The two case studies in the context of housing have served to make the data and the findings from our analysis more real and relevant. The decision was made early in the design of the project to focus on the context of housing and homelessness as highly topical and timely (Dawson, 2022), reflecting the housing shortage currently impacting communities across Australia (Australian Government, 2023).

The case studies specifically explore women's housing, recognising the growing awareness of the gendered nature of homelessness, housing accessibility and security.

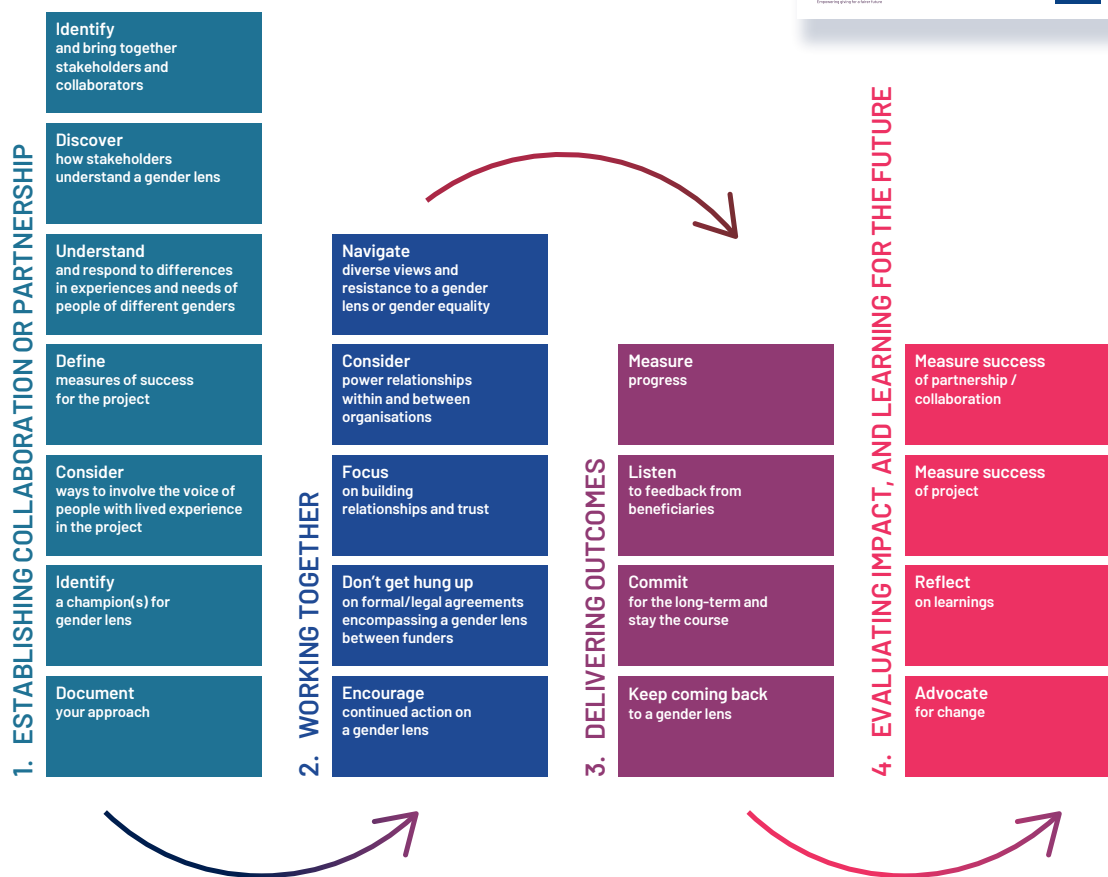
We also recognise that issues of housing and homelessness intersect with many other focal areas for philanthropic funding, for example physical and mental health, unemployment, and disability.

The project was also informed by an Expert Reference Group, convened by Australians Investing In Women. This group comprised people with deep experience in the philanthropy, housing and gender equality sectors. The Expert Reference Group met online on three occasions over the course of the project, and gave feedback on the direction of the study, its relevance to practice, and how findings and knowledge could be communicated and shared.

Ultimately, the hope and intention is that this work will increase the number of philanthropic organisations that apply a gender lens to partnerships and collaborations, and champion gender equality. We hope that more philanthropic organisations recognise the value of considering gender, thereby increasing their impact, reducing the disadvantage disproportionately experienced by women, and contributing to a more just and equitable Australia.

Introducing Equitable Foundations: A Framework for Gender-wise Philanthropy in Partnerships

Informed by this report on the two case studies, we have developed a Framework, with a set of principles and a pathway for funders to guide them in applying a gender lens when working in partnerships – both for those starting out, and for those further along their journey.



This Framework includes:

- **steps to apply a gender lens** to your partnership or collaboration
- an **exploration of myths** around applying a gender lens
- a **set of leading practice principles** for applying a gender lens and gender analysis
- a list of **further resources**.

To access the Framework and this Report online, as well as other resources from Australians Investing In Women, please visit aiiw.org.au.

How did we seek answers to our questions?



Our two case studies, Viv's Place and My Home, provided an opportunity to delve into the experiences, perspectives and reflections of a group of people connected by their involvement in philanthropic collaborations supporting women's housing.

The case studies were constructed or developed through the collection of data using one-on-one interviews. Ethics approval for this study was gained through review by the University of Melbourne's Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Human Ethics Committee, Office of Research Ethics and Integrity. The reference number was 2023-25950-40020-3.

We had **two research questions** that were specific to the case studies:

- How do philanthropic partnerships apply a gender lens?
- What insights can be gained about a gender lens by exploring philanthropic partnerships for supporting women's housing?

The case study research method involves an in-depth exploration, description and explanation of a particular individual, group, event, or phenomenon (Brewerton & Millward, 2001). It seeks to provide a comprehensive and contextual understanding by collecting and analysing a rich set of data. The benefits of case studies include their holistic nature, their emphasis on contextual understanding, and the analysis of the interplay of various factors.

How did we choose the two case partnerships to study?

In our selection of the two case studies:

- We looked for examples of cases where at least two philanthropic funders had provided money to support long-term, secure housing for women or gender minority groups.
- We sought cases where the housing project was either complete or very nearly complete, and tenanted, so that the partnership had already gone through an extended period of working together.
- We were interested in choosing two cases that were quite different from each other, with regard to location, size, and tenants. We were also keen to have different funders for the two cases.
- We sought out cases where gender was an important factor in the partnership of funders and supporters, but we didn't exclude cases where any single funder did not apply an active gender lens.
- We ruled out partnerships that supported crisis accommodation or refuges, or transitional housing, as well as those that focused on advocacy or housing policy change.

The selection process itself highlighted several noteworthy findings. The scarcity of long-term housing projects with support from at least two philanthropic funders, in addition to government and private sector funding, was itself an intriguing discovery. Both cases exemplify new models, albeit at different scales, indicating philanthropic funders' interest in promoting innovation or funding the proof of concept for wider dissemination and replication.

Furthermore, both cases specifically targeted women, without including gender minority groups, although both took into account other forms of disadvantage faced by women. We were unable to identify a partnership case study for general population housing to explore the application of a gender lens in that scenario. We recognise that case studies of projects applying a gender lens that involved more diverse populations would lead to additional insights.

How did we seek answers to our questions?

Interviews

Across both cases, we interviewed previous and current CEOs, executive directors, board members, managers of philanthropic funds, as well as staff and managers of nonprofit organisations involved in the partnerships. We interviewed nine stakeholders in the Viv's Place partnership and six stakeholders in the My Home partnership.



Tenants were not interviewed for a number of reasons. In both cases, the tenants had only recently moved into their new homes. This meant that collective voices, such as through a tenants committee, had not yet been established. Further, the philanthropic partnership was the focus, or unit of analysis, of the research. While tenants may be able to reflect on the effects for them of the gender lens applied, they did not have direct experience of the partnerships between organisations.

The interview questions began with an organisation's connection and involvement with the housing project, and the collaboration or partnership of organisations involved. Questions then moved to focus on the idea of a gender lens, or gender equity principles, and how they applied to the project and the partnership. Interviewees were asked about the resources needed, champions for applying a gender lens in a project, and the challenges encountered. The interview questions concluded with the topic of evaluation using a gender lens within a project collaboration, and any final reflections.

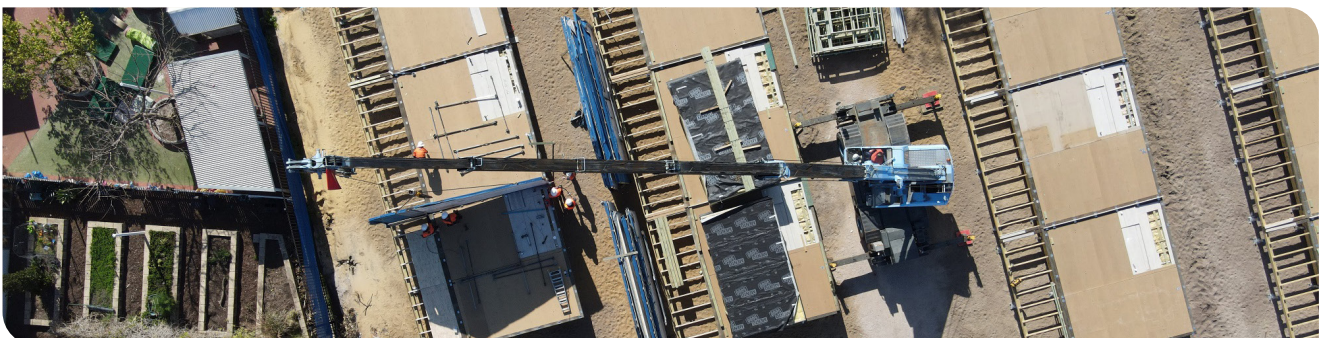
All interviews lasted for approximately one hour and were done online with video recorded. The purpose of the recording was to enable a text transcript of the interview to be generated using Artificial Intelligence. This text was then carefully checked, word by word, against the audio recording. The transcripts from all the interviews in both case studies were then 'coded', where short fragments or small sections of the text were identified as relevant to different themes or ideas. It's the frequency and pattern of these themes across the two case studies that was of most interest to our research.

Limitations

We acknowledge some limitations that constrain the scope and contributions of this study. The key limitations are:

1. A small case sample of two cases and 15 stakeholders, although there was breadth in the sample in terms of stakeholder roles and funder types.
2. A snapshot study at one point in time didn't allow us to examine impacts of the projects or how they were experienced by the people expected to benefit.

These limitations were determined by the budget and time frame for this exploratory work.



Above: Construction of the My Home project. My Home photography supplied by Minderoo Foundation; photographer Emma Dolzadelli ©



Our findings

In the following pages, we present both cases.

For each, we tell the story of the project, highlight its core features, and then examine the four stages of the partnership, reflecting the structure of the Framework that accompanies this report (summarised on previous pages). We then compare the two cases, highlighting similarities and differences.

To present what we've learned, we begin by setting out the key emergent themes from the analysis of the case studies, adopting the principles from the Framework.

Next we look at what makes for a valuable partnership including consideration of a gender lens, as well as what causes problems and how they are prevented or managed. Lastly, we note proven practices for applying a gender lens in partnerships.

Case Study: Viv's Place

The story of Viv's Place

Viv's Place is an apartment building that is home to 60 families.

It provides long-term housing for single mothers and their children who have experienced family or domestic violence.

It is located in south-east Melbourne, Victoria (VIC). Apartments range in size from one to four bedrooms, and there are common indoor and outdoor spaces for tenants. There is 24/7 security for the building, and access is tightly controlled to keep the women and children who live there safe. The approximate cost of the land purchase, construction and fit-out of the building was \$31 million.

The project was funded by a group of philanthropic funders, the Victorian State Government and private donations.



Philanthropic funders included:

- The Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation, a large public philanthropic foundation.
- The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, a workers’ union with a program of charitable grants in the community with an emphasis on issues linked with its membership group.
- The Ian Potter Foundation, a very large private philanthropic foundation.
- The Gandel Foundation, a private family foundation.
- The Shine On Foundation, a private family foundation.
- The William Angliss Charitable Foundation, a philanthropic foundation that operates in Victoria and Queensland.

Other funders included the Victorian State Government and the Friday-Ferrell-Hudson-Maher family.

In-kind and pro bono support came from many involved in the design and construction of the building, including ARM Architecture. Other vital organisations in the partnership were Launch Housing and Uniting Vic.Tas who both provide supports and services to tenants; as well as local schools. An initial project evaluation has been completed for Launch Housing.









From the initial concept onwards, the project took almost seven years before tenants began to move in in August 2022. The concept was drawn from New York following the Housing First model, which focuses on providing stable long-term housing with wraparound support for residents, rather than assessing and determining 'level' of need.

The project was conceived and planned as a housing solution for women. A gender lens was applied to the identification of the target group of tenants, recognising that family violence is the key driver of homelessness in Australia, and that women are the majority of victims. The needs of this tenant group were then incorporated into the design and fit-out of the apartment building and its surrounds.

The philanthropic funders interviewed each brought different perspectives and interests to the development of Viv’s Place. For some, the specific focus on gender was vital; others identified the systemic and compounded disadvantage experienced by children as the most important factor in their support for the project.



CORE FEATURES SUMMARY OF VIV’S PLACE

 Size & type of housing	Long-term, open-ended tenancies in a purpose-built, multi-storey building providing 60 apartments, up to four bedrooms in size, plus indoor and outdoor common areas
 Location	South-East Melbourne, VIC
 Nonprofit delivery partner	Launch Housing (community housing provider and property manager)
 Project budget	Approx. \$31 million
 Tenanted date	Opened in July 2022, fully tenanted in November 2022
 Tenant group /beneficiaries	60 women and approx. 100 children who have experienced family and domestic violence
 Ongoing services provided	On-site, 24-7 security, plus support services provided by Uniting Vic.Tas
 Types of funders/ profiles	Seven major funders: four philanthropic foundations, one union, one private family group, and the Victorian Government; plus many other donors
 In-kind contributions	Major in-kind contributions from ARM Architects, construction companies, and Regenerate who provided all furniture, whitegoods, soft furnishings and more to the apartments

Process and stages of the Viv's Place partnership

Drawn from the interviews, the issues below are specific to this case, presented under four stages of a partnership.



- Identify
- Discover
- Understand
- Define
- Consider
- Identify
- Document

STAGE 1: ESTABLISHING COLLABORATION OR PARTNERSHIP

- **Gender lens applied** ↴
Long origin story, starting with a conference in New York where early advocates learned about a gender-lens housing model.
- **Gender lens applied** ↴
Key preliminary work by two nonprofit CEOs to get project up and running, customising the message to fit the specific charitable interests of each potential funder.
- **Gender lens applied** ↴
A tightening of focus early in the development stage towards women who had experienced family or domestic violence (the original focus was more broadly on women experiencing mental health challenges).
- Very early funding commitment from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation signaled the legitimacy of the project to other funders.
- A move from the first proposed location to the eventual site when one organisation declined to join the partnership. This significantly increased the total project cost, through the need to purchase land.
- Funding commitment from government was made after significant philanthropic support was secured.

- Navigate
- Consider
- Focus
- Don't get hung up
- Encourage

STAGE 2: WORKING TOGETHER

- **Gender lens applied** ↴
Multiple funders with different interests and foci, but a shared commitment to women's housing.
- The partnership was described by one participant as "**a tangled ball of wool!**" due to the complexity of the partnership.
- There were significant in-kind contributions from architects and capital campaign leaders.
- The length of the project timeline made it a marathon, and required stamina from funders.

Direct responses from interview subjects are **marked in italics**.

Elements of the partnership where a gender lens was implemented are noted using **Gender lens applied** ↴

Process and stages of the Viv's Place partnership



Measure progress

Listen

Commit

Keep coming back

STAGE 3: DELIVERING OUTCOMES

- **Gender lens applied** ↴
As well as gendered needs, the project also considered the unique needs of children and young people, those from diverse cultural backgrounds, and First Nations people. Some identified issues with the model will be resolved in collaboration with tenants (possibly through a committee or representative group).
- Viv's Place has achieved significant renown as a successful project, with a lot of pride expressed by funders.
- Anecdotal feedback and early testimonials are very positive.
- The building is described by one interview participant as *"...a safe place to grow"*.
- Site visits have been and continue to be an important way of understanding and disseminating the model.

Measure success of collaboration

Measure success of project

Reflect

Advocate

STAGE 4: EVALUATING IMPACT, AND LEARNING FOR THE FUTURE

- **Gender lens applied** ↴
Evidence from Viv's Place is seen as vital to securing government funding for the roll-out of the model nationally.
- An initial evaluation of the project has been completed by Urbis for Launch Housing (not a public document). This evaluation was focused on the project, not on the funding partnership.
- Funders bring different additional lenses to the evaluation of the housing and services (e.g. focus on recovery from domestic or family violence, focus on children's educational outcomes, focus on mental health).

Case Study: My Home

The story of My Home

My Home is a group of 18 small prefabricated homes for women over 55 years old, in Fremantle, Western Australia (WA).

The project was developed by My Home Australasia in conjunction with St Patrick's Community Support Centre Ltd (St Pat's) who operate the site and provide ongoing services to tenants. The houses were prefabricated offsite and then quickly assembled on land close to a railway line and station, leased long-term from the WA State Government's Department of Communities (Housing Authority). Each of the small homes is identical in size and layout and designed for a single person. The development includes common outdoor spaces for tenants.

The construction of the small homes and the development of the site were funded by a collaboration of philanthropic funders, with significant in-kind assistance from multiple community service clubs. The total cost of the construction was approximately \$3 million (not including in-kind contributions), and the process took approximately four years. The first group of tenants moved in during July 2023.



The philanthropic funders who supported the project included:

- Lotterywest, a government agency that derives its income from a statewide lottery and distributes all profits through grants for community benefit across WA.
- The Minderoo Foundation, one of Australia’s largest private philanthropic foundations. Based in Perth in WA, the Foundation names advancing gender and equality as one of its three key focus areas.
- The Sisters of St John of God, a charity that supports organisations providing services to people experiencing homelessness, particularly vulnerable women and children, refugees and asylum seekers in WA and VIC.

Support was provided by a range of community organisations and individuals including Rotary WA, the Catholic Women’s League of WA, and Soroptimist International of Albany, who provided in-kind services along with financial contributions and community fundraising. These community service organisations focused on the fit-out of the very small prefabricated homes, including furnishings, and contributed a significant volunteer workforce as well as managing the fit-out process.

The My Home project in Fremantle is planned as the first of many such projects, and offered a proof of concept for the offsite component construction, the high-density use of the land, and the design of the homes for single tenants.

The gender lens in the partnership was primarily reflected in the choice of women over 55 as a group for whom few long-term, secure housing options were available, and recognising that insecure and intermittent employment in low-paid roles had combined with caring responsibilities to result in little accumulated wealth. This focus on the lived experiences and circumstances of women of that age was noted by funders as having caused particular and specific disadvantage, yet these women had **“been completely invisible for service delivery and design to traditional support services”**. Generally, these women have no previous engagement with support services and are new entrants to poverty and disadvantage solely due to their gender. They have been invisible to systems previously, hidden under high household – but low individual – wealth.

The gender lens applied by funders in partnership focused on both the tenant group, and interest in the My Home model as opening the door to new housing possibilities. There was an association between these two ideas, where the likely success of the pilot project was increased by the community support offered to the tenant group who were perceived as both deserving and non-threatening.



CORE FEATURES SUMMARY OF MY HOME	
 <p>Size & type of housing</p>	Long-term, open-ended leases for 18 prefabricated and demountable small homes, each housing one person only
 <p>Location</p>	Congdon Street in North Fremantle, WA on a railway reserve, made available through a 15-year lease
 <p>Nonprofit delivery partners</p>	St Patrick’s Community Support Centre (property manager) and My Home Australasia (designer and developer)
 <p>Project budget</p>	Approx. \$3 million
 <p>Tenanted date</p>	Tenants moved in over a period of 6 weeks from July 2023
 <p>Tenant group /beneficiaries</p>	Single women over the age of 55 who were previously homeless
 <p>Ongoing services provided</p>	Through St Patrick’s Community Support Centre, located just over 2 km away
 <p>Types of funders/profiles</p>	Three major funders: one philanthropic foundation, one charity and one government agency
 <p>In-kind contributions</p>	Some key examples include WA State Government through land lease, Rotary WA, the Catholic Women’s League of WA, Soroptimist International of Albany, and construction companies

Process and stages of the My Home partnership

Drawn from the interviews, the issues below are specific to this case, presented under four stages of a partnership.



- Identify
- Discover
- Understand
- Define
- Consider
- Identify
- Document

STAGE 1: ESTABLISHING COLLABORATION OR PARTNERSHIP

- **Gender lens applied** ↴
The interest in women over 55 as the tenant group for the first My Home development was supported by growing quantitative data and evidence on the needs of this cohort, operational experience from St Pat's ongoing service delivery, and community forums.
- Started with partnership between My Home Australasia Ltd (a registered charity with Deductible Gift Recipient status) and St Pat's. Key individuals were the CEO and founder of My Home Australasia, the CEO and project lead from St Pat's, and a WA State Minister and local member for Fremantle.
- As a start-up organisation with no track record, the partnership with St Pat's was essential for My Home to be able to secure funding for the project.
- Each of the three main philanthropic funders knew and respected the work of the others, including differences in focus and interests.

- Navigate
- Consider
- Focus
- Don't get hung up
- Encourage

STAGE 2: WORKING TOGETHER

- **Gender lens applied** ↴
The tenant group was perceived by all funders in partnership as being ideal for the first iteration of the My Home housing model, as they increased local community acceptance.
- St Pat's was the central linchpin, received all funding, and negotiated land lease agreement with the WA Government.
- A substantial contribution was made by Rotary WA with regards to fit-out and furnishing of homes, plus community fundraising across WA, and in-kind support from volunteers.
- Delays incurred through the COVID pandemic, red tape around land lease, and site contamination requiring remediation.

Direct responses from interview subjects are *marked in italics*.

Elements of the partnership where a gender lens was implemented are noted using **Gender lens applied** ↴

Process and stages of the My Home partnership



Measure progress

Listen

Commit

Keep coming back

STAGE 3: DELIVERING OUTCOMES

- **Gender lens applied** Gender lens and focus on women was particularly appealing to women's service organisations who actively seek projects where their networks and skills are beneficial.
- The project received Perth/ Fremantle and WA State news media coverage as a *"good news story"*.
- Local foot traffic (the site is close to a train station and a daycare centre) and in-person engagement generated community interest and support.
- There was strong demand for housing places, and tenants were selected for diverse circumstances, e.g. people experiencing rough sleeping, some employed but couch surfing, some with chronic health issues.
- Community service clubs increased engagement with the project.



Measure success of collaboration

Measure success of project

Reflect

Advocate

STAGE 4: EVALUATING IMPACT, AND LEARNING FOR THE FUTURE

- **Gender lens applied** A few issues raised by tenants are being addressed, e.g. security concerns with no site fencing.
- An evaluation is planned but not yet commissioned.
- St Pat's is undertaking an internal assessment and review.
- The model was intended for replication from the outset, and My Home is actively seeking further sites.
- Two philanthropic funders said in hindsight they could have done more to support the early development stages through referrals and sharing networks/expertise.

Snapshot

Comparing and contrasting insights from the two cases

This section aims to highlight some of the key ideas emerging, not to compare the success of one case study against the other. The comparison highlights differences which are illuminating.



Similarities	Differences
Partnerships	
<p>Success The projects are regarded as highly successful.</p> <p>Project-based The partnerships came together around projects, and the need for multiple funders to fully fund the proposed project.</p> <p>Service delivery The projects were initiated and supported by a well-established and highly regarded service delivery nonprofit organisation.</p> <p>COVID delays The COVID pandemic, the need for multiple funders, and difficulties with sites caused significant delays to both projects.</p> <p>Complexity Meeting the ongoing reporting requirements, criteria and interests of multiple funders was complex and time consuming for the nonprofit organisation that received funding.</p>	<p>Scale The two projects were very different in scale (number of organisations in the partnership), size (number of homes) and financial cost.</p> <p>Funding Viv's Place involved a significant proportion of funding from the state government; My Home involved government support only through the land lease.</p> <p>In-kind support My Home project involved significant in-kind support from local and state-based community service clubs in the fit-out of the tiny homes, and in community fundraising to cover those costs. These types of organisations were not involved in Viv's Place.</p>

Similarities

Differences

Gender lens

Focus on women's homelessness

The projects aimed to support vulnerable women who were characterised as “worthy” beneficiaries, and in both projects a strong concern from funders for women’s homelessness was noted.

Gender focus

The projects targeted women, rather than other genders.

Soliciting feedback

The lived experience of tenants and their feedback were valued.

Intersectionality

The projects included a secondary, intersecting lens (age, and experience of family or domestic violence).

Identification of application of gender lens

Not all organisations within the partnerships identified themselves, or the partnership as a whole, as applying a gender lens.

Differing models

My Home is seen as a demonstration housing model for any tenant group/cohort; Viv’s Place is seen as a model specifically for women.

Viv’s Place considered the unique needs of women and children leaving family violence, providing additional bedrooms and play-spaces for children and 24/7 security.

Housing and support services

Demonstration projects

The projects are seen as pilot housing models for potential replication elsewhere in Australia, demonstrating proof of concept.

Open-ended lease agreements

The projects provide tenants with an open-ended lease agreement.

Tenancy restrictions

There are restrictions on who can reside in the housing, and the conditions upon which they can maintain tenancy.

Ongoing support for tenants

Ongoing support and services for tenants are part of the projects. In Viv’s Place, these are co-located in the building, in My Home they are located in the local community and through outreach to the My Home residents.

Land purchase vs. lease

Viv’s Place involved land purchase; My Home is on “lazy” land leased from a state government authority.

Difference in community connection

Viv’s Place was connected with the local community in particular through children and schools. My Home’s tenant group (women over 55 years old) do not have this point of connection.

Prioritisation of security

Security is very important in Viv’s Place, recognising the violence previously experienced by all tenants. Security was not seen as an issue for My Home during the project development (but was raised by tenants after moving in).

What have we learned?



Emergent themes from the analysis of the case studies are summarised below, adopting the principles from the Framework.



Above L-R: Michael Piu (CEO, St Patrick's Community Support Centre), Michelle Blakeley (Founder, My Home Australasia), Louise Olney (Director of Safety & Economic Security, Minderoo Foundation). Photograph supplied by Minderoo Foundation; photographer Emma Dolzadelli ©

1. A gender lens is an entry point of inquiry to consider different lenses intersecting and interacting to address disadvantage and achieve greater impact.

The partnerships of funders and other supporting organisations for both case studies involved applying multiple lenses. Organisations were also at different places in understanding, recognising and applying a gender lens. This added complexity but was not regarded as a problem, rather as a way of gaining insights and increasing the impact of a project.

"...lives that were very, very non-linear lives. Very, very many factors playing out on people".

2. A gender lens improves outcomes for everyone, not just women.

The benefit of a gender lens was identified as impacting families and children in particular, as well as the local communities in which the two projects are situated. Both were also seen as pilots for future projects focusing on the needs of other groups with different characteristics and circumstances. The case studies also highlighted the benefits for some funders of working with a gender lens in partnerships, learnings that were being applied by funders to other partnerships and projects in different cause areas.

What have we learned?

3.

A gender lens is a tool to share voice and empower people who use services.

Applying a gender lens in the two case projects primarily involved asking questions and incorporating feedback into the physical design of housing, the tenant group targeted, and their needs. Some funders also saw evaluation as an important element of a gender lens, enabling the perspectives of tenants to inform future projects and partnerships. While the case projects were each in the early stages of tenancy, a committee or similar process for voicing tenants' views and needs was supported for a later stage.

"Simply asking who isn't getting heard".

4.

Applying a gender lens requires synthesising diverse sources of evidence and recognising people's lives are complex and multi-dimensional.

Evidence of all kinds was described by almost everyone interviewed as vital for applying a gender lens. What constituted evidence was discussed in different ways, with some referring to national and population level data from government and academic sources. Others drew on operational experience, and most talked about the lived experience of both beneficiaries; and themselves and their peers. In both cases, evidence was seen as necessary to secure support from boards for funding.

"Where women are doing worse... but then we try and fund in the positive".

5.

The language of what we call partnerships can vary.

It's more than simply one person or organisation deciding to work together and collaborate to multiply benefits.

What constitutes a 'real' partnership was discussed frequently, and funders broadly preferred the term 'collaboration' to describe the case partnerships reported here. Working over a period of time with a wide group of peer funders and supporters delivered successful outcomes in both cases. Relationships and roles were complex and changed over time, influenced by external factors and key individuals within partnerships. A gender lens was a shared value or focus that allowed for diverse understandings while enhancing commitment.

"...[the case project] was a really great example where we proactively collaborated. We didn't just recognise that we were both funding, but we had active conversations throughout the development of the project to compare notes and to help them to help us".

What makes for a valuable partnership including a gender lens?



Partnerships were given credibility through the early **involvement of large and well-known funders**.

Their support for a project brought reassurance to peer funders, particularly in the preliminary stages of securing the funding required to ensure that a project went ahead.

"...the kind of gravitas that comes with major grants from them is really, you know, both publicly and there's more informal conversations around it that is significant. What it signals to other funders who are considering it".

Interviewees preferred to describe the case projects as **'collaborations'**.

Partnerships were seen as more planned, formal and organised arrangements, whereas collaborations involved less of a commitment, were more ad hoc and flexible as they evolved, and shorter in duration. This lower level of commitment felt easier for philanthropic funders, requiring less time and skills to manage.

"...it wasn't a partnership from the get-go. It sort of happened along the way".

A commitment to a project that was focused on the needs of women was sufficient for funders to collaborate. It **wasn't necessary for philanthropic funders to agree at the outset** or share an understanding of what a gender lens meant and how it should be applied.

This evolved and changed over the course of a partnership, through interactions and peer influence.

"Because otherwise, not to put too fine a point on it, but otherwise it would have been for our board, this is just another housing project".

The participants in the case partnerships were all quite clear that **no philanthropic funder should question the principles, purposes or strategy of another**.

No participant suggested that one funder could or should attempt to influence other funders' work or decisions. This was expressed as reflecting the diversity of the philanthropic sector, and also respecting that the founder's wishes, as understood and interpreted by the board of a foundation, were primary.

"He's [representative of another partner organisation] one of my closest colleagues, but we have very different approaches to how we like to spend funding".

Despite this, **having champions for a gender lens within a partnership was very important**.

These individuals actively sought data and evidence about the benefits of a gender lens. They introduced a gender lens into discussions, planning and strategy, at both the partnership level and the project level. The gender lens champions identified in interviews were all women, and almost always in leadership (CEO or board director) roles. Consistency was seen as vital, in that champions would continually push for a gender lens.

"So it's very much worth having a kind of, probably a small group of champions who are all working on it, that would be my main thing, I'd say. Makes it much better".

Trust either existed between funders before a specific partnership or project, or developed during it.

This applied particularly to the nonprofit service delivery organisation that received the funding. Trust in the lead funder was also important: trust in both their judgement in supporting the project and committing early to the partnership, and also trust that they would maintain that commitment.

"...when things get difficult, then we still stand there."



Viv's Place photography supplied by Launch Housing; photographer Tatjana Plitt ©

What causes problems?

In the section below, we examine some of the issues and challenges identified by our participants, and what's most useful in preventing and managing them. These points are organised below under the four stages of a partnership set out in the Framework that accompanies this report.

1. ESTABLISHING COLLABORATION OR PARTNERSHIP

- For start-up organisations with no existing relationships or track record, how do you build a trusted reputation?
- Having to identify the specific interests of various philanthropic and other funders, and how to fit into the balance of their work.

"it's usually slightly different languages, and I sometimes feel like...that's one of my main activities, translation between different ways of looking at problems and solutions".

2. WORKING TOGETHER

- Cost for the funders in terms of time and resources to engage in partnerships. This was mentioned by almost everyone. *"It's just not viable".*
- Red tape and administrative processes causing delays. *"...creativity through hard slog".*
- Connecting in different ways with local versus state versus national level partnerships.
- Boards were seen as roadblocks to working with a gender lens. To what extent will your board let you go? How do you get a partnership over the line with the trustees? *"I don't think that anyone in my level needs to be converted. I think they need to be given permission".*
- Departure and turnover of key individuals in a partnership, and the attendant difficulty and time cost of rebuilding relationships and re-establishing the gender lens focus.

3. DELIVERING OUTCOMES

- Partnerships are non-linear and unpredictable.
- Funders can be frustrated by the slow pace of progress. *"...it's a very, very long road".*
- Effort of having to constantly remind and advocate for a gender lens.
- There can be cognitive dissonance with funders who support a gender lens in practice but say that it's not a policy.

4. EVALUATING IMPACT, AND LEARNING FOR THE FUTURE

- The cost of evaluations. These costs are often not requested or funded up-front as part of a project.
- Every funder wants something slightly different from an evaluation, maybe not at first, but with follow-up questions. *"...it's a bit of a jigsaw behind the scenes".*
- Many funders aren't asked about a gender lens by those seeking funding. This makes it hard to present evidence to philanthropic boards that a gender lens is important, when applicants are silent.
- Because both projects were new and quite different models, the evaluations required are 'non-standard' and more complex.

Proven practices

In this section, we share some highlights regarding what works, and what's most useful. These are the nuts and bolts and the everyday practices in the case partnerships. They are organised below under the four stages of a partnership set out in the Framework that accompanies this report.

1. ESTABLISHING COLLABORATION OR PARTNERSHIP

- Established and trusted relationships between at least one of the funders and the service delivery nonprofit organisation that is receiving the funds.
- An assessment or due diligence by the funder that both the cause area and the other partner organisations are the right people to work with at that point in time.
- Confidence in the ability and reliability of others in the partnership, including other funders.
- Close connections between leaders in the partner organisations, in particular at CEO level.

"Walking alongside a partner during development phase".

3. DELIVERING OUTCOMES

- Staff talking to beneficiaries (here, tenants) frequently, both formally and informally, to stay close to evolving issues
- Unwavering commitment and focus by a small group of CEOs and key supporters, regardless of delays.

"...it was a bit clunky, but it still worked".

"I couldn't come to certain events that happened, but some of my staff did. And every time...I heard back from those staff members that were there that it was fantastic, it was great".

2. WORKING TOGETHER

- A sense of possibility and excitement and shared energy.
- Fostering and sharing learning between funders, drawing on each other's expertise in specific domains.
- Respect and sincerity, based on shared underlying values and purposes around a gender lens.
- A shared language and understanding around issues, and a bank of possible solutions.
- An understanding of relationships, actors and networks in philanthropy.
- Maintaining relationships through one-on-one conversations, as well as group events and project meetings to keep partners up to date.
- The added value of collaboration involving local community organisations and fundraising.

"...more brains, more people, more points of influence".

"...people who are trustworthy, organized and, you know, are purpose driven".

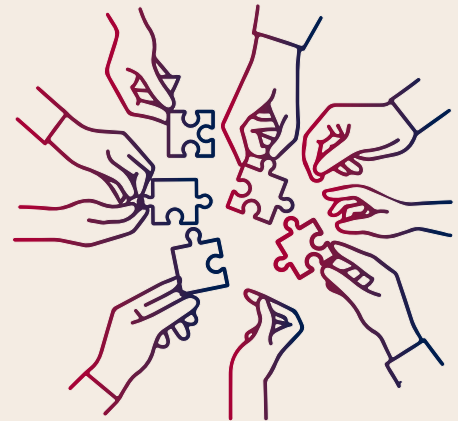
4. EVALUATING IMPACT, AND LEARNING FOR THE FUTURE

- Accepting reports and evaluations in different formats rather than specifying your own. *"We respect that they will be reporting to multiple entities. And so, we kind of let them lead the reporting process".*
- Ongoing tracking of outputs and outcomes that have made a difference to beneficiaries, rather than waiting for a formal evaluation to be done.
- Visiting the building and seeing what it provides was an important way of evidencing its impact to funders and other supporters, so that they can *"...hear firsthand and see firsthand about what has been done with that money".*

Where to next?

Following on from this initial study of applying a gender lens in philanthropic partnerships, future directions to explore include:

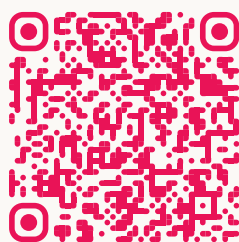
- **Educating** people about how to use the Framework to inform and advocate for a gender lens in funding partnerships.
- **Testing** the application of the Framework, and how it might be expanded or adapted:
 - within different size and type organisations and funding partnerships (inc. impact investors, government(s), not solely focused on philanthropic funders)
 - outside the context of housing
 - explicitly considering diversity of women including First Nations women, women with disabilities and applying multiple intersecting lenses
 - recognising gender diversity and the unique needs of people who are non-binary/gender fluid.
- **Listening to** and incorporating beneficiary voices with lived experience of projects funded through partnerships.



Explore the Equitable Foundations Framework

The Equitable Foundations **Framework** includes:

- **steps to apply a gender lens** to your partnership or collaboration,
- an **exploration of myths** around applying a gender lens,
- a **set of leading practice principles** for applying a gender lens and gender analysis, and
- a list of **further resources**.



To download the Equitable Foundations Framework, visit aiiw.org.au/research-resources/equitable-foundations

Additional resources

- AllW Guide to Gender-wise Philanthropy: aiiw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/AllW-Guide-to-Gender-wise-Philanthropy-April-2021web.pdf
- AllW toolkit Gender Wise Toolkit – Australians Investing In Women (AllW): aiiw.org.au/gender-wise-toolkit/
- Funders Together to End Homelessness (U.S.): funderstogether.org
- A Home of One's Own: philanthropic and social sector solutions for women's housing: percapita.org.au/blog/our_work/a-home-of-ones-own/

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Who undertook this study?



Melbourne Social Equity Institute

The Melbourne Social Equity Institute at The University of Melbourne conducts and facilitates interdisciplinary research that addresses the causes and consequences of social inequities and advances knowledge about effective ways to respond. The work of the Melbourne Social Equity Institute is focused on communities and co-production, and can be explored at socialequity.unimelb.edu.au.

The project team from the Melbourne Social Equity Institute included:

- **Professor Jo Barraket AM**
Director, Melbourne Social Equity Institute
The University of Melbourne
- **Professor Kylie Smith**
Faculty of Education,
The University of Melbourne
- **Associate Professor Victor Sojo**
Faculty of Business and Economics
The University of Melbourne
- **Dr Alexandra Williamson**
Senior Research Fellow
Melbourne Social Equity Institute



**AUSTRALIANS
INVESTING IN
WOMEN**

Empowering giving for a fairer future

Australians Investing In Women

Australians Investing In Women (AIIW) is a leading national advocate for Gender-wise philanthropy. Building on progress towards gender equity, AIIW takes an evidence-based approach and works in partnership with philanthropic, corporate and community leaders to strengthen society by catalysing investing in women and girls.

The project team from AIIW included:

- **Julie Reilly OAM**
CEO
Australians Investing In Women
- **Stacey Ong**
Project Lead for AIIW
(Founder of One Red Step)
- **Joyce Teo**
Operations Manager
Australians Investing In Women
- **Ella Mitchell**
Communications & Engagement Lead
Australians Investing In Women
- **Connor O'Brien**
Project Design Lead for AIIW
(Founder of Studio Sometimes)

Who undertook this study?

Expert Reference Committee

- **Adrian Appo OAM**
First Nations Lead
Yajilarra Trust
- **Hugh Belfrage**
Director
V&F Housing Enterprise Foundation
- **Catherine Brown OAM**
CEO
Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
- **Craig Connelly**
Partner Community Social and ESG Investment
Perpetual Private
- **Emma Dawson**
Executive Director
Per Capita
- **Erin Dolan**
Senior Program Manager
Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
- **Hanna Ebeling**
CEO
SEFA
- **Tania Farha**
CEO
Safe and Equal
- **Jeanette Large**
CEO
Women's Property Initiatives
- **Katherine Leong**
Specialist Advisor, Affordable Housing
Homes Victoria
- **Janet Liu**
Head of Social Impact
ANZ
- **Anna Marinovich**
Partnership Officer, Alliances
Paul Ramsay Foundation
- **Adam Ognall**
Executive Director Engagement
Philanthropy Australia
- **Robert Pradolin**
Executive Director
Housing All Australians
- **Louise Rutten**
Chair
Housing All Australians
- **Tiarne Shutt**
Associate Director, Business Advisory
First Nations Capital
- **Kate Temby**
Managing Director, Institutional Client Group
MetLife Investment Management
- **Genevieve Timmons**
Senior Associate Peer Philanthropy
Paul Ramsay Foundation



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