

## MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 11AM ON 7 DECEMBER 2021

# Survey paints a troubling picture of sexism in the ad industry

MELBOURNE - 7 December 2021

Gender inequality remains pervasive in the Australian advertising industry, according to the results of a national survey released today.

shEqual – Australia’s movement for advertising equality – today released preliminary results of a landmark national survey exploring perceptions of gender equality within the advertising industry at an online event, *Bold & Strong: Presenting the shEqual Survey results*. The event was opened by the Victorian Minister for Women, the Hon Gabrielle Williams MP, with an exciting funding announcement, and featured a panel of industry leaders.

Nearly 600 advertising professionals from around Australia responded to the survey, demonstrating a high level of interest in issues of gender equality, including among men, who made up 41% of respondents.

Disappointingly, the survey findings show that, while some progress has been made, sexism and gender discrimination continue to be everyday experiences for many women in the advertising industry. Survey respondents shared alarming stories of everything from sexist jokes to pregnancy discrimination to sexual assault. Two forms of gender discrimination within the industry that emerge most strongly from the survey results are pay inequality and discrimination against women when they have children.

Respondents of all genders believe that not enough action on gender equality is being taken by employers, industry bodies and governments. There is also a strong call for greater accountability for those who engage in – or protect those who engage in – sexist and discriminatory behaviours.

Clear gender differences emerge from the findings. Women are more likely than men to believe industry and workplace culture influence advertising content, less likely to believe gender equality is prioritised in Australian advertising, and more likely to support bold initiatives like gender pay transparency and quotas for women at senior levels.

Women are more likely to fear or experience negative consequences from speaking up, while some men don’t feel it’s their place to do so. Yet the findings clearly show that women in the industry want and expect men to be more active in their support for gender equality.

### **Quote attributable to the Hon Gabrielle Williams MP, Victorian Minister for Women**

*“There is a strong appetite for improving industry practices to better support women in advertising, but still a long way to go to achieve gender equality.”*

*“The shEqual survey findings show that the Australian advertising industry is critical in shaping gendered norms and attitudes. That’s why we’re providing a boost of \$275,000 to support shEqual to continue its important work in driving these much-needed changes in the advertising industry.”*

### **Quote attributable to Dianne Hill, CEO of Women’s Health Victoria**

*“The advertising industry is not alone in needing to tackle sexism and gender discrimination. But it is in a uniquely powerful position to influence positive change – not only in the workplace but in the ads we see and*

*hear every day. The shEqual survey findings are a call to action for the advertising industry to lead the way on gender equality. We are calling on the industry to get real... because it's time to get equal."*

For more information about the shEqual campaign, go to [shequal.com.au](https://shequal.com.au)

shEqual is an initiative of Women's Health Victoria and is supported by the Victorian Government and Respect Victoria.

**- Ends -**

### **Media inquiries and interviews**

For media inquiries, please contact Kylie Inserra, Communications Coordinator at Women's Health Victoria at [kylie.inserra@whv.org.au](mailto:kylie.inserra@whv.org.au) or 0409 119 101.

### **About Women's Health Victoria**

Women's Health Victoria (WHV) is a not-for-profit, statewide women's health promotion, advocacy and support service, focused on improving the lives of Victorian women. WHV collaborates with women, health professionals, policy makers and community organisations to influence and inform health policy and service delivery for women. The work of WHV is underpinned by a social model of health and a commitment to reducing inequities in health which arise from social, economic and environmental determinants. For more information, visit [whv.org.au](https://whv.org.au)

### **About shEqual**

shEqual is an Australian movement to use the power of advertising to promote gender equality and address the drivers of violence against women. Launched by Women's Health Victoria in 2020, and working in partnership with Australian advertisers, shEqual's mission is to raise industry and public awareness, reinforce positive behaviours, and empower people to take action in shaping how women are represented in the stories we tell and consume. For more information, visit [shequal.com.au](https://shequal.com.au)

For further information on shEqual, please contact Linden Deathe, Senior Project Officer – Gender Equality in Advertising at [linden.deathe@whv.org.au](mailto:linden.deathe@whv.org.au) or 0400 457 452.