

# Media Release

The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP

Minister for Education

Minister for Women



Friday, 16 September 2022

## PUTTING SEXIST ADS ON NOTICE WITH BOOST TO SHEQUAL

The Andrews Labor Government is continuing its nation-leading work on gender equality, expanding the shEqual campaign to tackle sexism, the objectification of women and gender inequality in the advertising sector.

Minister for Women Natalie Hutchins today announced the Labor Government will invest a further \$1 million in shEqual, launched in 2020 by Women's Health Victoria, to address the gender stereotypes and sexualising images of women in advertisements, as research shows they have undermined efforts to progress gender equality.

Across physical, digital and broadcast advertisements, the advertising industry has a major impact on our culture and society – and untold power to shape the way we see ourselves and those around us.

To create more positive representation in this space, shEqual has launched a national framework – *Seeing is Believing* – engaging the Australian Association of National Advertisers to strengthen its Code of Ethics, deliver gender equity training and a guide to help industry professionals identify and challenge harmful stereotypes in ads.

Women's Health Victoria's survey of almost 600 advertising industry professionals found that while there is a high level of interest in gender equality, including amongst men, and some progress has been made, women in the sector continue to experience everyday sexism and gender discrimination – which impacts the advertising we see.

More than 30 per cent of industry staffers hesitate to call out sexist or stereotypical content or portrayals of women in advertising due to fears of negative consequences.

Women's Health Victoria's work through shEqual will strengthen partnerships across the ad industry to embed gender equality in advertising content and tackle gender equality within industry culture – supporting the sector's leaders to take the action needed to see lasting change.

This announcement brings the Labor Government's total funding of shEqual to \$1.89 million, as part of \$240 million in investments in the *Victorian Budget 2022/23* to continue unprecedented work to end violence against women and within families, and build a better future for women and gender-diverse Victorians.

### Quote attributable to Minister for Women Natalie Hutchins

*"Advertising is highly visible in our community – and it's important it reflects the type of society we want to build, so we're so proud to support this nation-leading work to bring lasting change when it comes to gender equality."*

### Quote attributable to Women's Health Victoria CEO Dianne Hill

*"In the past two years, engagement with shEqual has doubled and we are seeing more diverse and positive depictions of women and girls in ads we see every day. We know we need to create culture change, and we're excited to continue that work with this investment, to embed lasting change across the industry."*