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A gender lens in philanthropic partnerships: Case narratives from two housing initiatives

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SOCIAL EQUITY
INSTITUTE**



Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

I acknowledge the Turrbal and Yugara as the First Nations owners of the lands where I live and work in Brisbane, Queensland.

I pay my respects to their Elders, lores, customs and creation spirits, and I recognise that these lands have always been places of teaching, research and learning.

At the Melbourne Social Equity Institute at the University of Melbourne, we also acknowledge and pay our respect to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff, Elders and collaborators, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who visit our campuses from across Australia.



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AUSTRALIANS INVESTING IN WOMEN

Empowering giving for a fairer future

Australians Investing in Women (AIIW) is a leading national NFP advocate for Gender-wise philanthropy.

Building on progress towards gender equity, we take an evidence-based approach and work in partnership with philanthropic, corporate, and community leaders to strengthen society by catalysing investing in women and girls.

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Our sincere thanks to the Paul Ramsay Foundation for project funding



What is this research about?

Phenomenon we are exploring is philanthropic partnerships applying a gender lens

Context in which we are exploring that phenomenon is housing

Definition of a partnership:

For the purposes of this project, a philanthropic partnership is defined as a formalized, joint-working arrangement between two or more organizations (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).

Cornforth, C., et al. (2015). "Nonprofit–Public Collaborations: Understanding Governance Dynamics." Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly 44(4): 775-795.



What do you mean by a "gender lens"?

A gender lens refers to 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.

Why partnerships?

- Relates to the steady growth of Australia's organised/structured philanthropic sector. Increases in scale and the larger number of actors are enabling more collaborations.
- Benefits include leverage, greater impact, diverse perspectives, shared knowledge and learning. Collectively can achieve more than is possible for any single organisational actor.

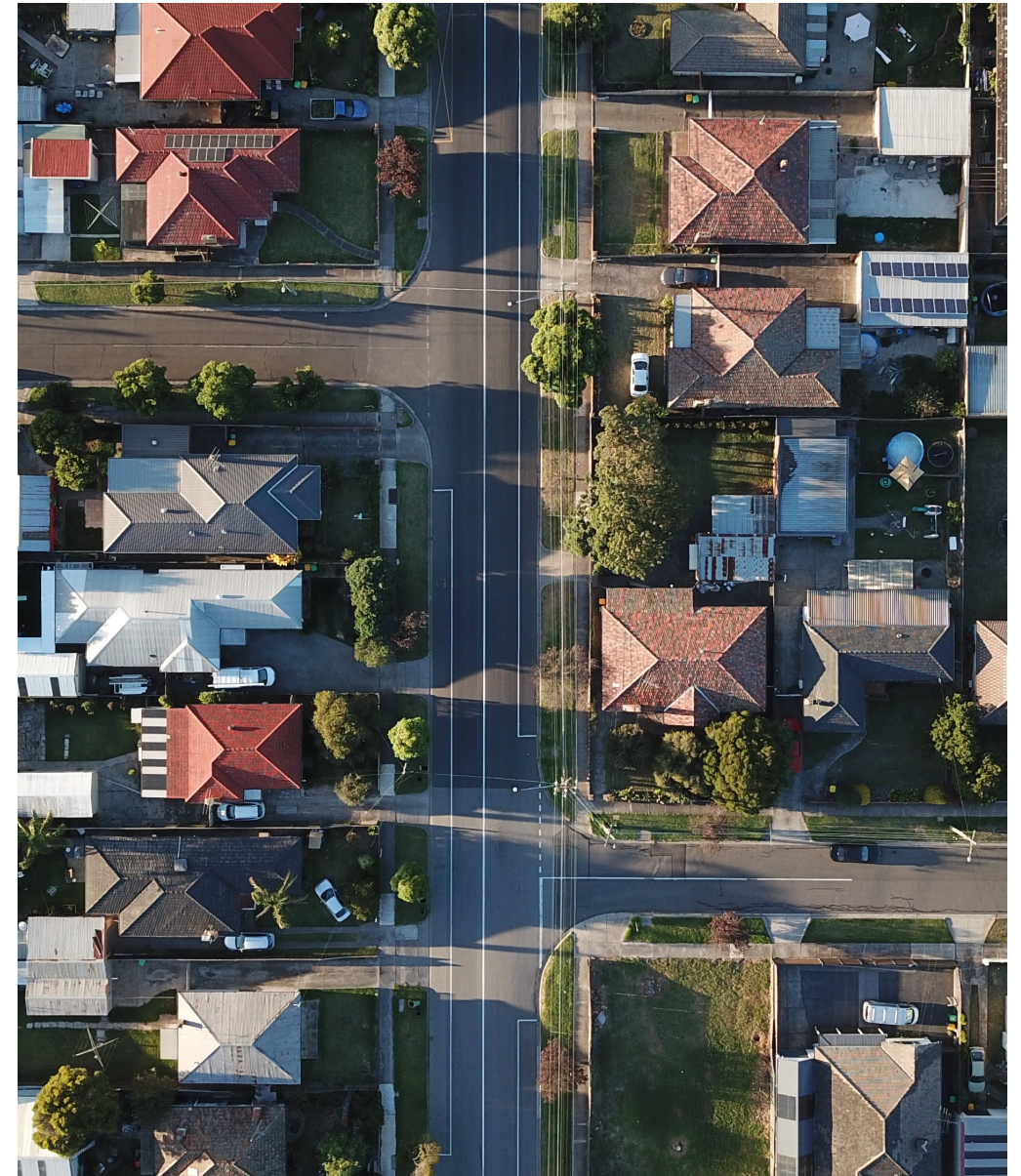
Why a gender lens?

- The homogenisation of the 'public' in the 'public benefit purposes' that underlie all philanthropic giving has resulted in a profound disservice to women and girls.
- Philanthropy has significant potential to mitigate gender inequality through grantmaking that is informed by a gender lens.
- That involves understanding and evidencing the distinct needs and experiences of women and other marginalized genders and then directing resources towards organisations and programs that actively promote gender equality.



Why choose housing as the context for our study?

- Highly topical and timely context. Rental housing is scarce and unaffordable, buying a home is out of reach, demand for social housing far outstrips supply.
- Long-term housing issues are particularly acute for women and increasingly for older women.
- Housing and homelessness are also recognised as intersecting with many other focal areas for philanthropic funding, for example physical and mental health, unemployment, and disability.
- Focus of the project on systemic disadvantage and exclusion.





Literature on evaluating a gender lens in collaborations

As examples, some explorations of philanthropy with a gender lens in the literature (both academic and professional) include:

Bolinson, C., & Allan, L. (2023). The Field-Building and Grantee Experimentation Role of Foundations in Impact Investing as Illustrated by a Gender-Lens Investing Case Example. *The Foundation Review*, 14(4), 27-44. <https://doi.org/10.9707/1944-5660.1632>

Johnston, K. (2017). A Gender Analysis of Women in Public-Private-Voluntary Sector Partnerships. *Public Administration*, 95(1), 140-159. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12288>

Ackerly, B. A. (2009). Feminist theory, global gender justice, and the evaluation of grant making. *Philosophical Topics*, 37(2), 179-198. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43154563>



Literature on evaluation of organisational partnerships and collaborations

As examples, some explorations in the literature (both academic and professional) of evaluation and philanthropic partnerships include:

Kinarsky, A. R., & Christie, C. A. (2023). The intent and influence of evaluation policies and strategies in the philanthropic sector. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 100. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2023.102343>

Benjamin, L. M., Ebrahim, A., & Gugerty, M. K. (2022). Nonprofit Organizations and the Evaluation of Social Impact: A Research Program to Advance Theory and Practice. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 52(1_suppl), 313S-352S. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08997640221123590>

Williamson, A. K., & Kingston, K. L. (2021). Performance measurement, evaluation and accountability in public philanthropic foundations. *Evaluation Journal of Australasia*, 21(2), 101-119. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1035719X211000880>

Kinarsky, A. R., & Christie, C. A. (2021). Analysis of Evaluation Policies in the Philanthropic Sector. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 43(2), 175-192. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214021989435>

Tassie, B., Murray, V., Cutt, J., & Bragg, D. (1996). Rationality and Politics: What Really Goes on When Funders Evaluate the Performance of Fundees? *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 25(3), 347-363. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764096253005>

What are we actually doing?



Our research methods are focused on canvassing a broad range of perspectives on partnerships applying a gender lens.



We are exploring 2 case partnerships.



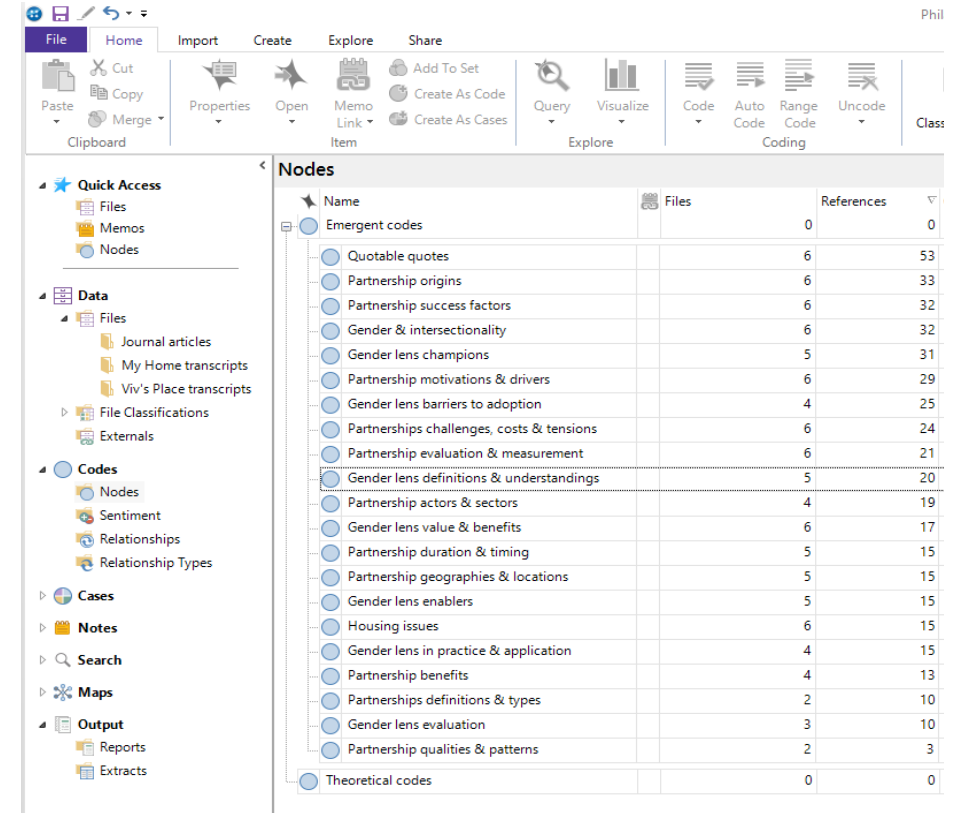
We are documenting insights through interviews with partnership actors into not just what works and what doesn't, but why it works and why it doesn't.



We have ethics approval secured through the University of Melbourne, and have completed data collection.

Research methods

- Informed by an Expert Reference Group for project, established and hosted by Australians Investing in Women
- Outputs available in late 2023 are a case study report, plus a guide/framework to applying a gender lens in philanthropic partnerships (not only those supporting housing projects)
- 15 semi-structured interviews undertaken by Zoom and recorded
- Included questions around evaluation of the project, the partnership, and the application of a gender lens
- Transcription of audio recordings by AI, then carefully checked by interviewer
- All interviews listened to by another researcher
- Coding of emergent themes in NVivo software



Phil

File Home Import Create Explore Share

Paste Copy Merge Clipboard Properties Open Memo Link Create As Code Create As Cases Query Visualize Code Auto Code Range Code Uncode Class

Quick Access

- Files
- Memos
- Nodes

Data

- Files
 - Journal articles
 - My Home transcripts
 - Viv's Place transcripts
- File Classifications
- Externals

Codes

- Nodes
- Sentiment
- Relationships
- Relationship Types

Cases

Notes

Search

Maps

Output

- Reports
- Extracts

Nodes

Name	Files	References
Emergent codes	0	0
Quotable quotes	6	53
Partnership origins	6	33
Partnership success factors	6	32
Gender & intersectionality	6	32
Gender lens champions	5	31
Partnership motivations & drivers	6	29
Gender lens barriers to adoption	4	25
Partnerships challenges, costs & tensions	6	24
Partnership evaluation & measurement	6	21
Gender lens definitions & understandings	5	20
Partnership actors & sectors	4	19
Gender lens value & benefits	6	17
Partnership duration & timing	5	15
Partnership geographies & locations	5	15
Gender lens enablers	5	15
Housing issues	6	15
Gender lens in practice & application	4	15
Partnership benefits	4	13
Partnerships definitions & types	2	10
Gender lens evaluation	3	10
Partnership qualities & patterns	2	3
Theoretical codes	0	0

Our case selection criteria were:



- Must include at least 2 funders, at least one of which must be a philanthropic foundation, but preferably two or more.
- Must include a focus on the particular needs and circumstances of women
- Looked for variation between the 2 cases, so preferably not same funders
- Partnerships must be supporting housing for women that is longer-term and stable.



- Did not consider cases where a sole philanthropic funder supported a housing project.
 - Not crisis accommodation, emergency relief, or temporary shelters.
 - Not looking at those supporting advocacy or policy change around housing.
- (Not within the scope of this current study, but may be of interest for future inquiry).*



Case study A: Viv's Place

- New 7 story building with 60 apartments
- Located in Dandenong, an outer suburb with a low socio-economic profile, south-east of Melbourne
- Land purchase, construction and fit-out supported by a collaboration of funders
- Project cost approx. \$33 million
- 9 interviews undertaken May - July 2023, each 60-70 minutes duration





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Case study B

Perth, Western Australia



Case study B: My Home

- 18 pre-fabricated tiny homes, architect designed and purpose built
- Located in Fremantle, a port suburb of Perth in Western Australia, on previously unused land next to a railway line
- Land leased from State Govt, construction and fit-out supported by a collaboration of funders
- Project cost approx. \$3 million
- 5 interviews undertaken June – Sept 2023, each 60-70 minutes duration



Dimensions and foci of evaluation

Evaluation of the funded **project**:

- Capital works projects can simply be evaluated as "did it get built?"
- Many interests, purpose and lenses from many funders that needed to be untangled in evaluations

Evaluation of the **partnership** or collaboration:

- Rarely formal funding partnerships, so not evaluated per se
- Reflections and learnings for future are the most common framing for evaluations in the form of reviews
- Strong reluctance to tell other funders/peers what they should be doing

Evaluation of the application of a **gender lens**:

- Gender lens as incremental or layered actions, rather than shared policy determined at outset, thus rarely evaluated
- Gender lens in the evaluation of design & construction of building(s)
- Gender lens in the evaluation of outcomes and impact for clients/tenants





Key themes around evaluation in *philanthropic partnerships*

- Evaluation at multiple levels

...the different major philanthropic funders ...have all come at it from a slightly different angle in terms of what the most important parts about the project are to them, and how to track those outcomes that we're seeking.

- Motivations and drivers to evaluate

Because if we can't learn ourselves and also tell you as a funder what works and what doesn't, and how we can improve it, then there is no point in us doing this.

- Data and measurement

Making sure we're speaking to these foundations in the same language that they're speaking to us in. But when there are a number of them, and they all have their own sophisticated evaluation systems, it's ensuring that our data can meet their data and that can be quite complex.



Evaluation in *philanthropic partnerships*

- Purposes of evaluation

And we can't wait to get the results from Viv's Place because we're not going to fund the next one, if it didn't work for Viv's Place, right? So if what we say is, you know, a large family violence wraparound service place doesn't work then we want to know that... And we're looking at another one right now.

- Challenges & tensions of evaluation

...they're really good [the external evaluators]. But even they had trouble, because of how you kind of pin certain outcomes to the fact of the housing and support, with lives that were very, very non-linear lives. Very, very many factors playing out on people. And also, how you do a before-and-after, when models of provision change?

...when you've pitched a project for years in order to get it built and then operational, it can be quite hard to shift into that kind of mindset of inquiry. And we're probably haven't got all this right. How do we stay open to criticism and acting on criticism?



Key themes around evaluation of a gender lens

- Gender and intersectionality

But I don't think there is a great knowledge of the various lenses and intersectionality of human existence, frankly, in philanthropy or in the mainstream discourse in this country or the West, as such, in fact. So more and more change is definitely needed.

So in our strategy, we have right at the top you know, that we apply a climate lens and a gender lens. And somewhere in there, we talk about looking at overcoming disadvantage as well.

- Benefits of evaluating a gender lens

...even in our grant agreement, some of the outcomes would be... Yeah, we should get some information that does allow the gender lens to sort of shine through and show what they've been able to achieve.



Evaluation of a *gender lens*

- Barriers to evaluation of a gender lens

So there are different types of evaluations that we do for different types of grants. We do not necessarily address the gender aspect in a specific way. That's our failing. And we are kind of looking to work on that and embed that a bit further.

- Design of a gender lens evaluation

Obviously it's early in its operations, so how we adapt and change as we go forward is very definitely part of the evaluation as well. And I guess that's the other place where we've applied a gender lens. It's been through setting up our program logic, and about monitoring and evaluation review, what outcomes we're trying to achieve. What that looks like is very much based on a focus on women, and the women and their children.

Approaches to and dimensions of a gender lens

	Active	Passive
Public	<p>Advocate, communicate, disseminate broadly Recruit – who is invited onto the board or employed Included in policy and guidelines (and outward facing public materials e.g. website) Evaluate with a gender lens, and publish outcomes</p>	<p>Statement of position but no guidance No advocacy No evaluation with a gender lens Minimalist approach</p>
Private	<p>Advocate and communicate only to peers, collaborators, and within sector associations/groups Evaluate with a gender lens, but only share outcomes with in-group No statement of position</p>	<p>No statement, no advocacy May influence decision-making but not always May be only one champion within the organisation, who is tolerated No evaluation with a gender lens Element of denial or framing as gender-neutral</p>



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