



WARRNAMBOOL
CITY COUNCIL

Gender Equality Action Plan

2022 - 2026



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Foreword

This Gender Equality Action Plan describes how Warrnambool City Council will pro-actively work towards gender equality across all Council work sites.

The plan has been created by Council staff. All staff were provided with an opportunity to have input into the development of the plan and to have a further say over a draft plan. I would like to thank the Gender Equality Action Committee for leading the way in the development of the plan.

While anti-discrimination laws have been in place for some time, these had failed to bring about gender equality in many sectors for the workforce, including local government.

Recognising this, the Victorian Government created the Gender Equality Act (2020) and the Gender Equality Commission to provide the public sector with guidance on achieving gender equality.

Staff surveys have revealed that a disturbingly large proportion of staff have experienced harassment and inappropriate behaviour directly related to gender bias.

This must stop.

While our plan is required by legislation it is clear, based on the evidence provided by in-house surveys, that it is much-needed in our work place.

The plan describes the cultural shift that is required to bring about gender equality and the time for this to occur has arrived.

Peter Schneider
Chief Executive Officer
Warrnambool City Council



Role of the Gender Equity Action Committee

A Gender Equity Action Committee (GEAC) comprising staff and union representatives from across Council departments contributed to the development of this Plan in collaboration with Croxford Consulting and Women's Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West. The development of the Plan has been an exciting opportunity to start a conversation with our workforce about what gender equality looks like and why it matters.

The necessity of the Gender Equality Act 2020 to measure ourselves against the key gender equity indicators has highlighted gaps in our data collection and the criticality of creating a workplace culture where our people feel safe and supported. The first year of the Action Plan is focused on establishing the foundations for success and developing a further comprehensive and ambitious three-year focus for the Plan.

The GEAC is committed to driving outcomes that not only lift our results against the key indicators and that consider the intersectionality of our workforce, but which also demonstrate leadership and possibilities to local businesses and other Councils, and ultimately creates an environment that positions Warrnambool City Council as an employer of choice that enjoys the many benefits of a workplace that is safe, diverse and fair. We encourage our colleagues to take up opportunities to learn and be informed, to get involved and to drive and support change.

There will be other committee chairs and committee members throughout the life of this plan, we encourage you to be bold, ambitious and innovative and we wish you every success.

On behalf of the Gender Equity Action Committee

Alison Kemp, Chair.



Statement by Warrnambool City Councillors

At a formal Council meeting on Monday, March 7, 2022, Warrnambool City Councillors made the following Statement of Commitment to Gender Equality.

Warrnambool City Council is committed to gender equality. Warrnambool City Council commits to ensuring that all employees, regardless of their gender identity are treated with dignity, respect and fairness.

We are committed not simply to the idea of gender equality but to actions that will bring about equality that can be seen, measured and experienced by the people who work at Warrnambool City Council. We will keep informed of these actions and their progress with structured reporting and communication across Warrnambool City Council.

This Statement of Commitment commits to ensuring that gender equity is considered and prioritised in all current and future Council planning, policy, service delivery and practice, and to participating in regional, state and national initiatives that promote gender equality.

Achieving gender equality supports Council's aim that all forms of gendered violence against women and girls and persons of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities are eliminated.

Council commits that, further to our Council Plan 2021-2025 and our Councillor Code of Conduct 2021, we are committed to the principles that are at the core of the Gender Equality Act 2020.

These principles are:

- (1) All Victorians should live in a safe and equal society, have access to equal power, resources and opportunities and be treated with dignity, respect and fairness.
- (2) Gender equality benefits all Victorians regardless of gender.
- (3) Gender equality is a human right and precondition to social justice.
- (4) Gender equality brings significant economic, social and health benefits for Victoria.
- (5) Gender equality is a precondition for the prevention of family violence and other forms of violence against women and girls.
- (6) Advancing gender equality is a shared responsibility across the Victorian community.
- (7) All human beings, regardless of gender, should be free to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives without being limited by gender stereotypes, gender roles or prejudices.
- (8) Gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience on the basis of Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and other attributes.
- (9) Women have historically experienced discrimination and disadvantage on the basis of sex and gender.
- (10) Special measures may be necessary to achieve gender equity.



1. Introduction

This Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) is the first plan developed by the Warrnambool City Council since the introduction of the Gender Equality Act 2020 (Act) and covers the period 2022 to 2026.

The GEAP aims to meet five goals (detailed later in the GEAP):

Goal 1: ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE that supports equity, diversity and respectful behaviour;

Goal 2: EQUAL REMUNERATION for work of equal value (gender Pay Equity);

Goal 3: EQUAL OPPORTUNITY in recruitment and promotion;

Goal 4: LEAVE AND FLEXIBILITY conditions that are equal regardless of gender; and

Goal 5: COLLABORATION demonstrating a regional approach to data collection, evidence analysis and support.

1.1. Why Gender Equality is relevant and important

The Act outlines the following 10 gender equality principles.

- (1) All Victorians should live in a safe and equal society, have access to equal power, resources and opportunities and be treated with dignity, respect and fairness.
- (2) Gender equality benefits all Victorians regardless of gender.
- (3) Gender equality is a human right and precondition to social justice.
- (4) Gender equality brings significant economic, social and health benefits for Victoria.
- (5) Gender equality is a precondition for the prevention of family violence and other forms of violence against women and girls.
- (6) Advancing gender equality is a shared responsibility across the Victorian community.
- (7) All human beings, regardless of gender, should be free to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives without being limited by gender stereotypes, gender roles or prejudices.
- (8) Gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience on the basis of Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and other attributes.
- (9) Women have historically experienced discrimination and disadvantage on the basis of sex and gender.
- (10) Special measures may be necessary to achieve gender equity.

Council is committed to a more equitable, fair and less discriminatory organisation. Research shows that gender equity in the workplace leads to:

- improved productivity, economic and social outcomes;
- improved engagement and wellbeing of staff;
- enhanced ability of an organisation to attract talent and retain employees;
- enhanced capacity to innovate in order to solve complex problems during changing conditions; and
- enhanced ability to engage with Victoria's diverse community.

It is also expected that actions in this GEAP will result in improvements to issues predominately affecting women around:

- sexual harassment; and
- family violence.



1.2. The Workplace Equality and Respect Journey

Council has been active in its equality and respect journey but recognises more needs to be done.

- In 2019 the Council adopted the “Our Watch” Program; in 2020, 21 face-to-face workshops and staff sessions were undertaken as part of the Respectful Behaviours program.
- In 2020 a Leaders Program was rolled out across Council with a focus on tools and strategies to address allegations of inappropriate conduct.
- In late 2020 a commitment was made through the “Great South Coast Strategy to Prevent Violence against Women and Children” to deliver a program of clear action against family violence.
- In early 2021 workshops on existing policies and legislative responsibilities relating to the prevention of bullying, harassment and discrimination were delivered.
- In March 2021 the Gender Equality Action Committee was formed.

This GEAP has been prepared with support from Women’s Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West and Croxford Consulting in consultation with Council staff, particularly those comprising Council’s Gender Equity Action Committee.

The 10 principles and intersectionality data was incorporated into the analysis and development of the Action Plan Matrix with expert guidance from Women’s Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West, consideration of best practice publications and consultation and interaction with the Gender Equality Action Committee.

Councillors, union representatives and the senior leadership team have been briefed and consulted on the requirements of this GEAP and engaged actively in awareness and training sessions. A section of the intranet was established to support the dissemination of information, toolkits and training materials throughout the GEAP planning and implementation.

The GEAP and associated action plan matrix will continue to be a live document.

1.3. Vision for Gender Equality 2026

To create fair and equitable opportunities for staff and councillors in which everyone is able to access the same opportunities, resources and rewards regardless of gender.



2. Definitions

2.1. Gender

Refers to the way in which a person identifies or expresses their masculine or feminine characteristics. Gender is generally understood as a social and cultural construction. A person's gender identity or gender expression is not always exclusively male or female.

2.2. Intergender

Intergender people have a gender identity that is in the middle between the binary genders of female and male and may be a mix of both.

2.3. Gender Equality

Gender Equality means the equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women, men, and trans and gender diverse people. Equality does not mean that women, men and trans and gender diverse people will become the same but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on their gender. (LGV 2018, Introduction)

2.4. Gender Equity

Entails the provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities on the basis of gender. The concept recognises that people may have different needs and power related to their gender and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies gender-related imbalances. (LGV 2018, Introduction)

2.5. Compounded Gender Inequality

Section 6(8) of the Act outlines that gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience based on Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and other attributes. (www.genderequalitycommission (2021))

2.6 Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression and we must consider everything and anything that can marginalise people – gender, race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability etc.



3. Strategic foundation of the GEAP

3.1. Council Plan 2021-2025

The Council Plan is the key document that guides priorities and the aspirations of Council for the next four years. The Council Plan is a result of deliberative engagement with the community and works towards Warrnambool 2040.

The aspects of the Council Plan that are particularly relevant to this GEAP by providing strategic guidance are:

Goal 1: A Healthy Community

Objectives

- 1.1 Be a welcoming and inclusive city: Warrnambool will be a city that is more welcoming to all and which fosters diversity. Warrnambool will be a welcoming and inclusive city.
- 1.2 Engagement with the Aboriginal community: Council will pursue improved partnerships and meaningful engagement with Aboriginal people to grow opportunities and better outcomes for Aboriginal people. Warrnambool will be a city that values Aboriginal identity and culture.
- 1.3 Health and wellbeing: Council will take action to improve health, wellbeing and safety outcomes for Warrnambool's community. Warrnambool's people are healthy. Warrnambool is a safe and connected community.
- 1.4 An accessible city: Council will improve physical and social accessibility to community services, facilities, places and precincts. Warrnambool has accessible, high quality public spaces and facilities.
- 1.5 Recreation, arts, culture and heritage: Council will support opportunities to participate in a wide range of recreational, arts and cultural programs that promote activity, wellbeing, diversity heritage and which increase community connectedness. Warrnambool is a safe and connected community.
- 1.6 Community learning pathways: Council will support and encourage lifelong learning that helps build community resilience and preparedness for change.

3.2. Healthy Warrnambool 2021-2025

The Council's Municipal Health and Well Being Plan, known as Healthy Warrnambool 2021-2025, was prepared in October 2021 and is guided by Warrnambool 2040, the Council Plan 2021-2025, the demographic profile of the municipality, the health and well-being trends in Warrnambool and consultation with internal and external stakeholders.

The key priorities of the GEAP (to be implemented by a Community of Practice) relevant to this GEAP are:

- Improved physical health
- Improved social and emotional well being
- Prevention of family violence
- Reduced harm from alcohol and other drugs
- Increased resilience and safety from the impacts of climate change.

Challenges identified and capacity building needs, particularly around the prevention of family violence, have been incorporated into this GEAP.



3.3. The link to the Workforce Plan 2021-2025

The Local Government Act 2020 requires that Councils as part of their integrated strategic planning develop a Workforce Plan.

As part of the development of the Workforce Plan it must set out measures to seek to ensure gender equality, diversity and inclusiveness.

Where there is a link between this GEAP and the Workforce Plan, a specific reference has been made.

3.4. Policies and strategies

The organisation has a range of internal employee-related policies and strategies to ensure staff are protected and managed to reduce the incidence of risk and negative behaviours. This is in addition to the development of positive culture and leading organisational development and human resource practices.

An analysis using a gender impact assessment approach (GIA) needs to be undertaken on existing policies and compared against industry peers. Gaps and policy strengthening needs have been identified in the analysis section of this report and form several of the key actions in the Action Plan Matrix.

3.5. Other Victorian and Commonwealth Laws

The Act came into force on March 31, 2021 (part) and July 1, 2021.

In addition to the Act the following pieces of legislation are also relevant in addressing equality, reducing discrimination and creating a fairer Organisation:

- Fair Work Act 2002 (Commonwealth);
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic);
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic);
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Commonwealth);
- Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (Commonwealth);
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic); and
- WCC Enterprise Bargaining Agreement No. 8 and future agreements.

The Chief Executive Officer, senior management and the Manager Organisational Development are responsible for leading, guiding and training all staff in the requirements and expectations under the relevant legislation.



4. Informing the GEAP

The information and data that informed the GEAP was gathered from multiple sources.

4.1. People Matter Survey

Council undertook an employee experience survey in July 2021 which was conducted on behalf of most Victorian Local Government defined entities by the Commissioner for Gender Equality and the State Government People Matter Survey Team. A response rate of 21% was achieved which was low compared to the local government average of 32%.

4.2. Workplace Gender Audit

In response to the baseline audit required under the Act, a review of the Human Resources data bases was undertaken as at 30 June 2021 as part of the key requirement of the Act to gather and report on information relating to the following key indicators:

1. gender composition of all levels of the workforce;
2. gender composition of governing bodies;
3. equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value across all levels of the workforce;
4. sexual harassment in the workplace;
5. recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace;
6. availability and utilisation of terms, conditions and practices relating to family violence leave, flexible working arrangements and working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities;
7. gendered segregation in the workplace; and
8. gender composition of employees by occupation per Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations Codes as at June 30, 2021.

This data along with the strategic inputs have informed the development of five goals and associated actions that aim to improved outcomes for each of these indicators.

Council's on-boarding processes and databases have not historically captured fine grain staff demographic and diversity information. As such it has not been possible for this first GEAP to collect detailed intersectional employee diversity data relating to:

- race;
- culture;
- religion;
- sexual preference / LGBTIQ;
- aboriginality;
- age; and
- disability.

Strategies and actions are included in this GEAP to better capture staff demographic and diversity data in preparation for the future.

4.3. Interviews with and survey of Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

Interviews with 20 members of the SLT were undertaken in October 2021 to gain a greater understanding of the organisation's maturity, key issues and identification of future training and capacity building required in relation to gender equality, inclusiveness and diversity.



4.4. VAGO Sexual Harassment Survey

The Victorian Auditor General (VAGO) undertook a survey of local government employees and councillors across Victoria in December 2020 on their experiences with sexual harassment in the workplace. The response rate for Warrnambool City Council was a relatively low 22%.

Of the 145 staff who participated in the survey, 39 or 27% had experienced sexual harassment.

4.5. Internal Audit

The internal Audit Recommendations Report 2019 -2020 and 2020-2021 contains a list of organisational priorities to reduce risk. The listing has been reviewed and there are no specific recommendations that will influence this GEAP. Several recommendations are however relevant for the Workforce Plan.

4.6. Culture and Alignment Survey

The annual Insync - Alignment and Engagement Survey of all staff was not completed in 2021. Each Directorate undertook its own survey. Interviews with the Directors were undertaken to understand the outcomes of each Directorate survey. Relevant findings have been captured in this GEAP.

4.7. Best practice published by

- Gender Equality Commission - (www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au)
 - Women's Health Barwon South West – (www.womenshealthbsw.org.au)
 - The Workplace Gender Equality Agency – (www.wgea.gov.au)
 - The Fair Work Ombudsman – (www.fairwork.gov.au)
 - Our Watch – Workplace Equality and Respect – (www.ourwatch.org.au)
 - Shifting the Focus: Preventing gendered violence and harassment at work and supporting victim – survivors. (www.library.vla.vic.gov.au)
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4.8. Workforce consultation

At draft stage this GEAP was distributed to the entire workforce via email while printed copies were made available at outdoor work sites. A survey was made available to all staff and a link made available to this survey via QR code at outdoor work sites. The anonymous survey was open for one month. Fifty-three responses were received.

A briefing on the GEAP was presented to an informal Council meeting. Councillors expressed support for the Plan and a desire to make a formal Statement of Commitment to Gender Equality. This statement is included in the foreword of this GEAP.

5. Our Workforce

5.1. The workforce at June 30, 2021, comprised the following

Total workforce numbers:	
• Total headcount	643
• EFT	406
• Permanent FT staff	217
• Permanent PT staff	160
• Casuals and temporary staff	23
• Capitalised labour	6
Split of workforce by gender:	
• Male (M)	175
• Female (W)	231
• Self – described (S)	0

5.2. Diversity:

- 7% speak a language other than English at home;
- 1% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander;
- 54% identified as a woman;
- 5% identified as bisexual or gay or lesbian or pansexual;
- 6% had a disability;
- A significant component of the workforce has external caring responsibilities:
 - 29% have school-aged children;
 - 15% have children at or of pre-kinder age;
 - 20% of staff are caring for others who are frail, aged, medical condition, mental illness or disability.

The strategies and actions on possible improvements to workforce diversity are contained in the Action Plan Matrix and also referenced in the Council Workforce Plan.



5.3. Gender Composition

Women make up a higher proportion of certain occupations and industries, while men are more represented in others. This gendered segregation is driven by gendered norms and stereotypes about what work is appropriate for men and women, as well as structural factors including access to flexible working arrangements. Gendered workforce segregation reinforces gender inequality and widens the pay gap, as the average pay is lower in industries and occupations dominated by women. Organisations can use data on their workforce composition to see which roles and areas have more women or more men and consider how to achieve better gender diversity. (WHBSW 2021)

	Female	Male
Executive Management Team	0	5
Senior Leadership Team	6	15
Managers	8	22
Professionals	152	46
Technicians and Trade workers	6	23
Community and Personal Service Workers	131	22
Clerical and Administrative Workers	83	20
Machinery Operators and Drivers	0	9
Councillor	3	4

The GEAP includes strategies to address gender imbalance in the workforce. Women are often under-represented in leadership roles, and over-represented in lower-level roles. This contributes to the gender pay gap and means that organisations may be missing out on the expertise and skills of women at senior levels.



6. Implementing the GEAP

Council's first GEAP aims to build a strong foundation for phased improvement.

More work is required in the collection and analysis of data and in updating policies and procedures with a gender equality emphasis that will improve understanding of gender equality issues and improving workplace culture.

The role of the Gender Equality Action Committee will be critical in increasing awareness across Council and for the implementation of the GEAP and will ensure accountability for delivery of the GEAP.

The information gathered through surveys, staff interviews, review of best practice and data analysis has identified five key areas to focus on in the first 12 months of the GEAP. These five areas are expressed in the GEAP as goals (outlined below) and are supported by an Action Plan Matrix.

The Action Plan Matrix is divided into two parts.

Part 1 outlines the priorities that need to be achieved within the first year of the GEAP. These actions will see the development of:

- the Gender Equity Action Committee as champions for change;
- the capability of the leadership team to drive and support the change;
- staff understanding of why change is important; and
- a further detailed three-year road map to progress gender equality.

These actions will lay the foundations for transformational cultural change. This work will be undertaken with the support of Women's Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West.

Part 2 is a list of key actions identified throughout the development of this GEAP that will need to be detailed and implemented to support gender equity. This list will grow and evolve with increased staff engagement and improved data collection and analysis.



GOAL 1

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE that supports equity, diversity and respectful behaviour

Key indicators

1. Gender composition of all levels of the workforce.
4. Sexual harassment in the workplace.
6. Availability and utilisation of terms, conditions and practices relating to family violence leave, flexible working arrangements and working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities.

What the data is telling us

The People Matters Survey and the interviews with SLT point to cultural issues across Council that are impacting on equality, inclusiveness, diversity and wellbeing. They painted a picture of an organisation that had been through a tumultuous time in the past several years resulting in a team were largely unsatisfied with the current organisational culture.

Cultural change is required to create a positive culture that supports:

- diversity and inclusion;
- equal employment opportunity;
- gender equality; and
- respectful behaviours and safety.

and that:

- regularly measures the culture and staff satisfaction in the organisation;
- encourages the ability to speak your mind without fear of reprisal;
- recognises that there will be discipline consequences for poor behaviour; and
- sets clear lines of acceptable behaviour.

The People Matters survey revealed several areas for improvement from a cultural perspective:

- My organisation uses inclusive and respectful images and language (WCC 58%, LGA 82%).
- I feel culturally safe at work (WCC 72%, LGA 79%).
- Work is allocated fairly, regardless of gender (WCC 73%, LGA 81%).

Feedback from the interviews with the SLT also pointed to language and attitudinal issues on gendered norms and stereotypes.

The survey and interviews with the SLT showed that leaders in the organisation have committed to learn more about gender equality and that in recent times there had been informal encouragement for the culture to be inclusive and accelerate gender equality (69% of participants).

Sexual harassment in the workplace causes financial, psychological, and physical harm to victim survivors. It also has a significant economic cost to organisations and the community. Often, victim survivors do not make a formal report of their experience of sexual harassment. Barriers to reporting include fear of reprisals or other negative consequences, lack of confidence in the reporting system, and a limited understanding of what sexual harassment is.

The People Matters Survey identified that 11% of survey respondents at Council experienced sexual harassment compared to an industry rate of 7%.

In the year to June 30, 2021, one formal report was received and resolved to the victim's satisfaction by the Organisational Development Department.



Of those who experienced harassment, behaviours included suggestive comments or jokes, intrusive comments about life or appearance and inappropriate contact.

Of the 11% of respondents who experienced sexual harassment, 41% experienced the behaviour less than once a month and 12% experienced it every few days.

61% felt safe to challenge inappropriate behaviour; a low score was recorded for those who considered the “Organisation encourages respectful behaviours”.

It is of concern that respondents did not make a formal complaint because they:

- a. didn't think it was serious enough (22%);
- b. didn't think it would make a difference (19%);
- c. believed there would be negative consequences for their reputation (19%); and
- d. believed there would be negative consequences for their career (16%).

The reluctance to make a report because of the concerns outlined above leads to:

- a. ongoing poor culture;
- b. victims continuing to be affected by the behaviour; and
- c. behaviours not changing until victims feel safe to make a report.

The Victorian Auditor General Survey identified that 39 of the 145 respondents had experienced sexual harassment.

The reasons why the experiences were not reported were consistent with the People Matter Survey.

The GEAP includes strategies and actions to improve culture and remove barriers to reporting.

GOAL 2

EQUAL REMUNERATION for work of equal value (gender Pay Equity)

Key Indicators

3. Equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value across all levels of the workforce.

6. Availability and utilisation of terms, conditions and practices relating to family violence leave, flexible working arrangements and working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities.

The gender pay gap is persistent in Victoria and as of November 2021 was 14.3%. In the Victorian public sector, it is 9.3% (June 30, 2021). The gender pay gap is driven by factors including the unequal distribution of unpaid care work, higher rates of pay in male-dominated industries, and gender discrimination.

What the data is telling us

As part of the collection of baseline data by June 30, 2021, information on annualised base and total remuneration of women, men and self-described genders was collected and the “pay gap” between them was to be analysed. Mean and median calculations were then made of the pay gaps.

A review of the Council data identified a disparity between men and women salaries with men being paid on average 34.4% more than women overall.

Based on the data collected we know that women are in lower paid and part-time roles than men and this is a contributing factor to the salary disparity.

Across all industries in Australia the gap is 13.8%, across the public sector in Australia the gap is 11.2% (November 2021).

The strategies and actions on possible improvements to equal remuneration across the workforce are contained in the Action Plan Matrix and also referenced in the Workforce Plan.



GOAL 3

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY in recruitment and promotion

Key Indicators

1. Gender composition of all levels of the workforce.
2. Gender composition of governing bodies.
5. Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace.
6. Availability and utilisation of terms, conditions and practices relating to family violence leave, flexible working arrangements and working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities.
7. Gendered segregation in the workplace. Gender composition of employees by occupation per ANZSCO codes as at 30 June 2021.

Gender bias and gender stereotypes can influence recruitment, promotion, and career progression practices. This means that women may not have access to the same career opportunities as men. Other forms of disadvantage and discrimination can also have an impact, limiting career opportunities for women from different backgrounds, such as women with disability or older women.

The People Matters Survey outlined several concerning responses:

- a. My Organisation makes fair recruitment and promotion decision based on merit (WCC 49%, LGA 54%)
- b. Gender is not a barrier to success in my organisation (WCC 58%, LGA 74%)
- c. Sexual orientation is not a barrier to success in my organisation (WCC 61%, LGA 74%)
- d. Disability is not a barrier to success in my organisation (WCC 49%, LGA 60%)
- e. Senior leaders actively promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace (WCC 51%, LGA 71%)

Recruitments and Resignations

The baseline survey sets out that in the year to June 30, 2021, 89 women and 41 men were recruited. Exits from the organisation were 50 women and 16 men.

Career Development

In 2020-2021 the number of people who participated in career development training opportunities were 539 women and 354 men. It is apparent that the gender segregation across the workforce is reflected in the training numbers.

Higher Duties

Higher duties opportunities were offered consistently between genders with 32 women and 38 men paid higher duties in 2020-2021.

The strategies and actions on possible improvements to recruitment and promotion practices across the workforce are contained in the Action Plan Matrix and also referenced in the Workforce Plan.



GOAL 4

LEAVE AND FLEXIBILITY - conditions that are equal regardless of gender

Key Indicators

6. Availability and utilisation of terms, conditions and practices relating to family violence leave, flexible working arrangements and working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities.

Flexible working arrangements and leave entitlements including parental leave, help Victorians of all genders balance paid work with other responsibilities. However, structural and cultural factors mean women are far more likely than men to work flexibly, especially by working part-time, and taking longer parental leave. The Australian Bureau of Statistics has reported that women were twice as likely as men to have spent 20 or more hours a week on unpaid caring or supervision of children. It is important that Councils collect data on who is accessing flexible work to help determine what extra support might be needed. By encouraging more men to work flexibly and take leave to care for children or others, organisations can contribute to a more equal gender balance in unpaid work. (WHBSW 2021)

Family Violence Leave

Family violence causes significant trauma to a victim survivor, which can affect their ability to work. Victim survivors may worry about consequences if they try to remove themselves from the violent situation. This may include the perpetrator attending the workplace, or missing work to attend to housing and legal matters. Family violence leave supports victim survivors to manage the impacts of their experience. It also promotes an organisational culture that does not accept family violence. (WHBSW 2021).

What the data is telling us

The results of the People Matter Survey in relation to the availability and use of leave and flexible working conditions identified that:

- Using Flexible work arrangement is not a barrier to success in my organisation (WCC 49%, LGA 61%).
- There is a positive culture in my organisation in relation to employees that use flexible working arrangements (WCC 55%, LGA 86%).
- Having caring responsibilities is not a barrier to success in my organisation (WCC 59%, LGA 63%).
- Having family responsibilities is not a barrier to success in my organisation (WCC 63%, LGA 67%).
- My Organisation would support me if I needed to take family violence leave (WCC 76%, LGA 86%).

Of concern was the response relating to the attitude towards employees that use flexible working conditions showing a gap against industry norms of 31%. This attitude is a significant barrier to staff taking up flexible work arrangements.

The baseline data showed 30 more women than men accessing formal flexible work arrangements and this was reflected in bands 4, 5 and 6 of the organisation which historically are female-dominated segments of the workforce.

On a positive note, feedback from the People Matter Survey states that staff are confident that "if I requested a flexible work arrangement, it would be given due consideration". This was confirmed by the survey and interviews with SLT.

Parental and Carers Leave

- Flexible working arrangements: W = 1, M = 1, S = 0,
- Parental Leave: Total Number of Parental Leave takers: W = 12, M = 10, S = 0; Average Paid Weeks taken: W = 46, M = 10; Average Unpaid Weeks Taken W = 87, M = 10
- Parental Leave Exits: W = 1, M = 0.
- Family Violence Leave: W = 0, M = 0.
- People who accessed carers leave by Gender: W = 108, M = 34.



- Anecdotal evidence suggests that flexible work arrangements may be more prevalent than the data suggests as arrangements are made informally. These arrangements will need to be recorded to ensure equitable and fair provision.
- Women are taking three times the amount of carers leave taken by men. Carers leave and sick leave are taken from the same allowance and therefore women have significantly less sick leave entitlements.
- Statistical averages suggest that family violence is prevalent in a workforce this size and that family violence leave is not being either being sought or approved. More work needs to be done to ensure that barriers to accessing Family Violence Leave are removed.
- Women are taking nearly nine times the amount of unpaid leave taken by men, thereby reducing the accumulation of superannuation.

The strategies and actions on possible improvements to parental and carers leave across the workforce are contained in the Action Plan Matrix and also referenced in the Workforce Plan.

GOAL 5

COLLABORATION - Regional approach to data collection, evidence analysis and support.

The Women's Health network and in particular Women's Health Barwon South West have provided leadership and critical expertise to Councils and other defined entities in the region as a support to address issues of common concern and provide templates and guidance on the development of each council's GEAP.

The strategies and actions on possible regional approaches and collaboration are contained in the Action Plan Matrix.



Gender Equity Action Plan Part 1 – 2022

GOAL/ACTION	2022 MEASURE	ACCOUNTABILITY
GOAL 1 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE that supports equity, diversity and respectful behaviour Key indicators 1. Gender composition of all levels of the workforce. 4. Sexual harassment in the workplace. 6. Availability and utilisation of terms, conditions and practices relating to family violence leave, flexible working arrangements and working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities.		
Regularly measure culture and staff satisfaction in the organisation via consistent staff cultural surveys. Include questions that relate to the GEAP.	Positive trend year on year of improvement in awareness and behaviour.	OD Manager
Train and develop the workforce to understand what gender equality and gender equity look like in practice.	Training delivered to over 90% of permanent staff.	OD Manager
Support women in their career progression through targeted training, development of a Women's Leadership Group or mentor program.	Options identified and approved by EMT.	GEAC Chair
Support and resource the GE Action Committee to enable champions across the organisation and provide advice to management on gaps and best practice in the equality, diversity, discrimination and inclusiveness.	Training provided.	CEO
Provide a confidential process for staff to report improper conduct and promote the process through training.	Process communicated and used by staff.	CEO
Commit to reporting of sexual harassment complaints to ET as a standing workplace health and safety agenda item.	Agendas reflective of regular reporting requirements.	OD Manager
Actively participate in Respect 2040 and promote Sexual Violence Awareness month and Respect Victoria campaigns.	Evidence of actively participating including reports on each campaign and allocation of staff champions.	GEAC Chair
Develop a detailed 3-Year Road Map to achieve the goals of this GEAP, with consideration to actions identified in PART 2 of the Action Plan Matrix.	3-Year Road Map developed in consultation with staff.	CEO
EMT and SLT drive the GEAP and are actively engaged in achieving the purpose, objectives and goals of the Organisation's gender equality strategy, programs, events and initiatives.	Documented evidence from each individual member of actively engaging reported to OD.	CEO



GOAL/ACTION	2022 MEASURE	ACCOUNTABILITY
GOAL 2 EQUAL REMUNERATION for work of equal value (gender Pay Equity) Key indicators 3. Equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value across all levels of the workforce. 6. Availability and utilisation of terms, conditions and practices relating to family violence leave, flexible working arrangements and working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities.		
Better understand and address the Total Remuneration Gap between men and women.	Data analysis completed and report provided to CEO.	OD Manager
Review and comprehensively analyse the impact of allowances for different professional groups to our gender pay gap.	Data analysis completed and report provided to CEO.	OD Manager
GOAL 3 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY in recruitment and promotion Key indicators 1. Gender composition of all levels of the workforce. 2. Gender composition of governing bodies. 5. Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace. 6. Availability and utilisation of terms, conditions and practices relating to family violence leave, flexible working arrangements and working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities. 7. Gendered segregation in the workplace. Gender composition of employees by occupation per ANZSCO codes as at 30 June 2021.		
Review of position descriptions to remove gendered language.	Evidence of review.	OD Manager
Incorporate gender equality and intersectional workforce composition into a bi-annual GEAP report.	Positive trend year on year of workforce gender balance	OD Manager
Understand the factors resulting in separations from the organisation by implementing a structured exit process.	Exit interview process established and implemented	OD Manager
Develop a GEAP checklist to guide recruitment processes.	Checklist developed and utilised by Managers	OD Manager



GOAL/ACTION	2022 MEASURE	ACCOUNTABILITY
GOAL 4 LEAVE AND FLEXIBILITY - conditions that are equal regardless of gender Key indicators 6. Availability and utilisation of terms, conditions and practices relating to family violence leave, flexible working arrangements and working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities.		
Flexible work policy is reviewed to support gender equity.	Updated flexible work policy.	OD Manager
Identify best practice for improved parental leave and flexible work arrangements that can be incorporated into the three-year road map.	Updated policy reflecting these outcomes and employees accessing them without disadvantage.	GEAC Chair
Flexible work arrangements are documented and reported in a bi-annual GEAP report.	Year on year improvement.	OD Manager
Develop a separate family violence leave procedure and promote this to employees.	Evidence of this policy being implemented.	OD Manager / GEAP Champion
GOAL 5 COLLABORATION - Regional approach to data collection and evidence analysis.		
Engage with Great South Coast Group (GSC) of Councils and Regional Cities on the strategic leadership conversations for GE, inclusiveness and diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence of participation. - Updates reported to GEAC - Provide opportunities for Managers to participate and represent Council. 	Director Community Development
Actively participate in ongoing regional opportunities to collectively advocate for improvements in GE outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence of participation. - Updates reported to GEAC - Provide opportunities for Managers to participate and represent Council. 	CEO
Partner with Women's Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West to develop the GSC Respect 2040 Plan which provides a shared vision to address gender equity and prevention of violence against women.	Evidence of active participation.	CEO
Participate in MAV and VLGA leadership initiatives for Councillors such as the "Stand for Council" and "Local Women Leading Change" programs.	Evidence that the relevant staff have completed the programs.	CEO



Gender Equity Action Plan Part 2 – other actions identified to be considered for incorporation into the three-year GEAP (to be developed in Year 1).

GOAL/ACTION	MEASURE	ACCOUNTABILITY
Encourage senior management to role model genuine workplace flexibility.	EMT able to access flexible working arrangements.	CEO
Ensure all meetings have both in person and virtual attendance options.	Audit meeting invites as necessary. Data to support thought at time of booking meeting.	Manager Information Technology
Ensure consistent recruitment practices that are equal and fair.	Review recruitment practices of past 25 positions to understand gaps.	OD Manager
Establish a traineeship, cadetship or scholarships to support more diverse entry into non-traditional pathways.	Establishment of the pathway.	GEAC Chair
Evaluate barriers to training for staff.	Demonstrate outcomes of surveys and reduction in barriers.	OD Manager
Engage a specialist organisation to conduct sexual harassment training and the culture of reporting harassment on an annual basis.	Training delivered with organisation wide attendance.	CEO
Consider introducing a buddy system for staff in relation to meeting their training requirements.	Evidence that consideration was made and training developed.	GEAC Chair
Incorporate training needs into individual and team annual performance planning.		
Train appropriately and appoint lead Contact Officers that are “safe” to disclose / confide in and also can provide guidance and assistance in process and links to other supports.	Demonstration of the appointment of Contact Officers and evidence of use by staff increasing year on year.	CEO
Demonstrate that inappropriate behaviours will be dealt with swiftly and decisively by reducing the timeframe for resolution of discipline matters	Review of disciplinary matters to determine reduced timeframe for resolution year on year.	CEO
Actively promote and undertake Respectful Behaviours training on a bi-annual basis.	Record of training being completed.	OD Manager
Revise bullying policies and processes in line with best practice.	Policies updated and reflective of best practice.	OD Manager
EMT and SLT are committed to undertaking and promoting ongoing professional development and training in relation to gender equality.	Increased uptake on training relating to gender equity year on year.	CEO



GOAL/ACTION	MEASURE	ACCOUNTABILITY
<p>Finalises the roll out and live the organisational Values including strong advocacy from managers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Setting clear lines of acceptable behaviour ➤ Having confidence to call out bad behaviour ➤ Being aware that making people uncomfortable because of their gender or diversity is not OK. <p>Recognises that there will be disciplinary consequences for poor behaviour.</p>	Improved outcomes year on year on survey.	CEO
Align and integrate Act requirements with “business-as-usual”.	Consider outcomes of survey.	GEAC Chair
Continue to undertake Gender Impact Assessments (GIA) on key projects and policies.	Data evidencing GIAs completed.	GEAC Chair
Provide training to staff on diversity such as cultural awareness about first nations people and practices, gender diversity and fostering equality and respect, racism awareness, etc.	List of training required and delivered to staff.	OD Manager
<p>Develop and implement a communications strategy that regularly communicates gender equality principles and key learnings in the organisation on a regular basis with a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GE - LGBTIQ+ - People with a disability <p>The strategy will be consistent with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vic Health Framing gender messaging guidelines - Respect Victoria Guidelines - Domestic Violence Resource Centre 	Updated strategy.	Communications Manager
Provide professional development and training for communications team members and anyone within Council that is producing public facing messages, focusing on gender equality messaging.	Training delivered to all relevant staff.	Communications Manager
Develop regular dashboard reporting on GE indicators, salary trends, gender pay equity and employee demographics to senior leadership to inform gender equity goals, programs and initiatives.	Completed dashboard.	Manager Information Technology

