

Gender Equality Action Plan 2021–2025

We all benefit from gender equality





Photo: Wurundjeri Djirri Djirri dancers, celebrating connection to country

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

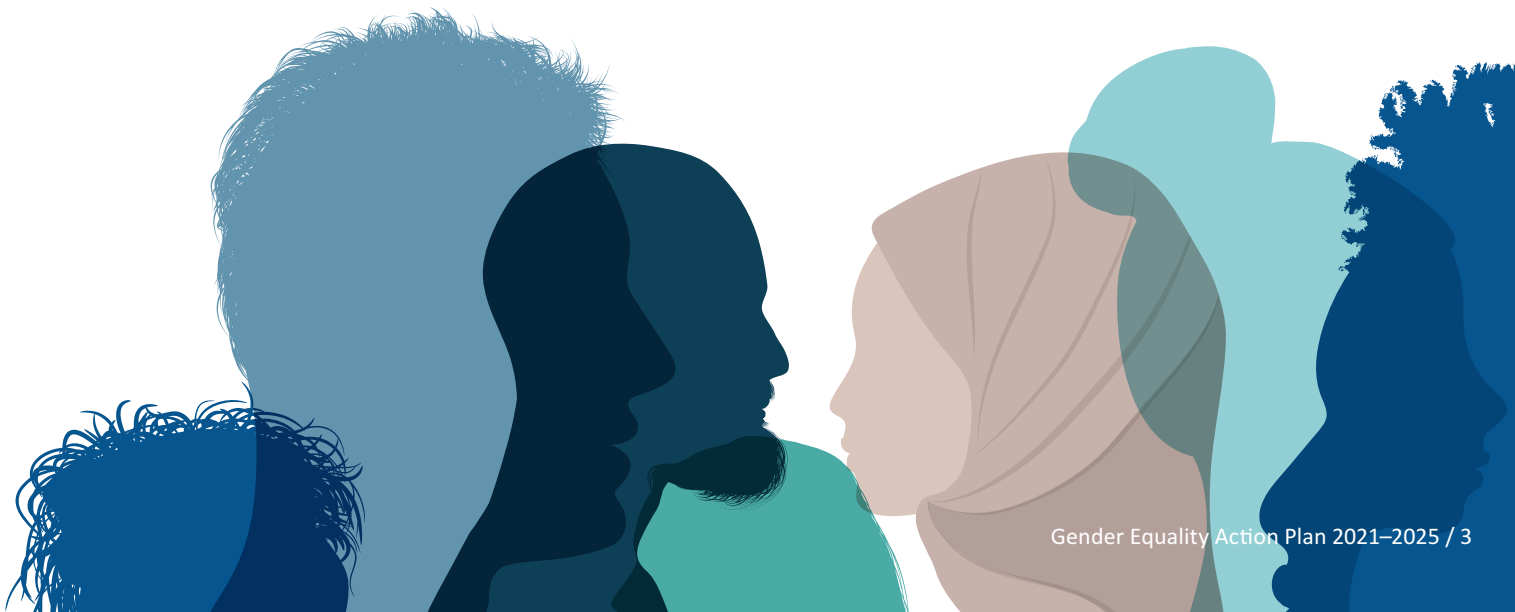
The City of Whittlesea recognises the rich Aboriginal heritage of this country and acknowledges the Wurundjeri Willum Clan as the Traditional Owners of this place.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised this report may contain images of deceased people.

Throughout this document, the term 'Aboriginal' is taken to include people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent.

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Message from our CEO



It is my great pleasure to present the City of Whittlesea's first Gender Equality Action Plan.

This Plan recognises the importance and impact of gender equality in our organisation and our community more broadly, and charts a clear path forward on our journey toward a diverse, fair and inclusive workplace.

There is much to be proud of in the progress our organisation has made in this area in recent years such as increasing the diversity of the management team and reducing the gender pay gap but there is more to do.

This plan sets out clear actions and strategies to remove barriers and open up pathways of opportunity for our women, men and gender diverse staff to achieve true gender equality.

I'd like to commend the officers that have led the development of this plan and thank the many staff who shared their experiences to inform the creation of an authentic and meaningful plan for our organisation.

I invite all staff to support this Gender Equality Action Plan, and act with intention to support the collective effort to create a safe and equal workplace at the City of Whittlesea.

Craig Lloyd
Chief Executive Officer

This plan sets out clear actions and strategies to remove barriers and open up pathways of opportunity for our women, men and gender diverse staff to achieve true gender equality.



Photo: Emma Meredith, Maternal and Child Health Nurse

Introduction

City of Whittlesea's Gender Equality Action Plan 2021–2025 outlines key gender equality insights relating to our workforce, and the positive actions we commit to driving forward over the life of this plan in pursuit of improved gender equality outcomes for our staff.

Our Gender Equality Action Plan has been developed in accordance with the guidance provided by the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector to meet the requirements of The Gender Equality Act 2020. It builds upon our history of gender equality work within the community and the workforce, most recently through the Equal and Safe Strategy 2019.

Our Gender Equality Action Plan is complemented by our recently developed Workforce Plan 2021 – 2025, which also includes a focus on gender equality specifically, and diversity and inclusion more broadly. Together, the actions contained within these plans represent a comprehensive program of work that acknowledges the importance of inclusive practices and the value of a diverse workforce that truly reflects our community.



Photo: L-R: Susan Hecker, Unit Manager Landscape & Open Space and Jack Jansen, Directorate Projects Executive

Our commitment

City of Whittlesea welcomes the opportunity to continue and deepen our exploration and investment into gender equality in our workplace and commit to the gender equality principles outlined in section 6 of the Gender Equality Act 2020, as outlined below.

- 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
- Gender equality benefits all Victorians regardless of gender
- Gender equality is a human right and precondition to social justice
- Gender equality brings significant economic, social and health benefits for Victoria
- Gender equality is a precondition for the prevention of family violence and other forms of violence against women and girls

- Advancing gender equality is a shared responsibility across the Victorian community
- 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
- 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
- Women have historically experienced discrimination and disadvantage based on sex and gender
- Special measures may be necessary to achieve gender equality

These principles underpin all the strategies and measures we have identified within this Gender Equality Action Plan by providing a framework to inform our thinking and exploration.



Photo: Taylah McLean, Digital Communications Officer

The case for change

At the City of Whittlesea, we believe that we all benefit from gender equality. We know that a diverse, fair, and inclusive workplace brings many benefits, including, but not limited to:

- diversity of thoughts and ideas
- increased innovation and creativity
- increased productivity
- improved employee wellbeing
- improved employer brand and employee attraction
- expanded talent pipelines

We also recognise and embrace our important role in representing our diverse community and role modelling positive gender equality action. Approximately 50% of our staff live within the municipality, meaning that we also have the opportunity and responsibility to influence community gender equality outcomes through workplace action.

Gender inequality is the key driver of violence against women, and our municipality has the highest number and rate of family violence incidents within the North East Metropolitan Region.¹ Locally in the City of Whittlesea, 49 per cent of men and 29 per cent of women indicate a low support for gender equality in relationships.²

Research shows that some population groups are at a greater risk of experiencing family violence or at a greater disadvantage accessing family violence services. These groups include people with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities and LGBTIQ* communities.³ These population characteristics are well represented amongst the diversity of our residents. The City of Whittlesea is home to a greater proportion of residents who were born overseas, speak a language other than English at home, have a disability or identify as Aboriginal, when compared to Greater Melbourne.⁴

¹ Crime Statistics Agency, 2021, Family violence data portal, Victoria Police Data Tables 2020-2021, <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/family-violence-data-portal/download-data-tables> [Accessed 8 October 2021]

² VicHealth 2015, Community Indicators LGA Profiles, https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/-/media/VHIndicators/Interface/Vic161_Whittlesea_indicator_v5.pdf?la=en&hash=492CBB3DC8DD1D484EF52346EA9225BDAF3F0E86

³ Women's Health in the North 2022, Building a Respectful Community Strategy 2022 – 2026, 220113-WHIN-BRC-Strategy-FA-web.pdf

⁴ idcommunity: City of Whittlesea Population Highlights (2019); Population highlights | City of Whittlesea | Community profile (id.com.au)



Intersectional gender inequality

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.⁵ This concept is referred to as ‘intersectional gender inequality’.

Intersectional gender inequality has been explored and considered in the development of this Plan, including through consultation with staff-led representative groups, such as the Pride Working Group, the Staff Disability Advisory Group and the Aboriginal Staff Network. Our employee experience data, obtained through the People Matter Survey, reveals that experiences and perceptions related to gender inequality are negatively compounded for some cohorts of our workforce, including:

- staff who identify as having a disability
- staff who are gender diverse, self-describe their gender or prefer not to disclose their gender (a combined response group for the purpose of the People Matter Survey report)
- staff who identify with a religion other than Christianity

“ I want to live in a world that is diverse, equitable and inclusive. A world where we are celebrated and embraced for our uniqueness and it’s about standing up and speaking out against discrimination in all its forms ”

Jasmine Ouaida – Youth Development Officer

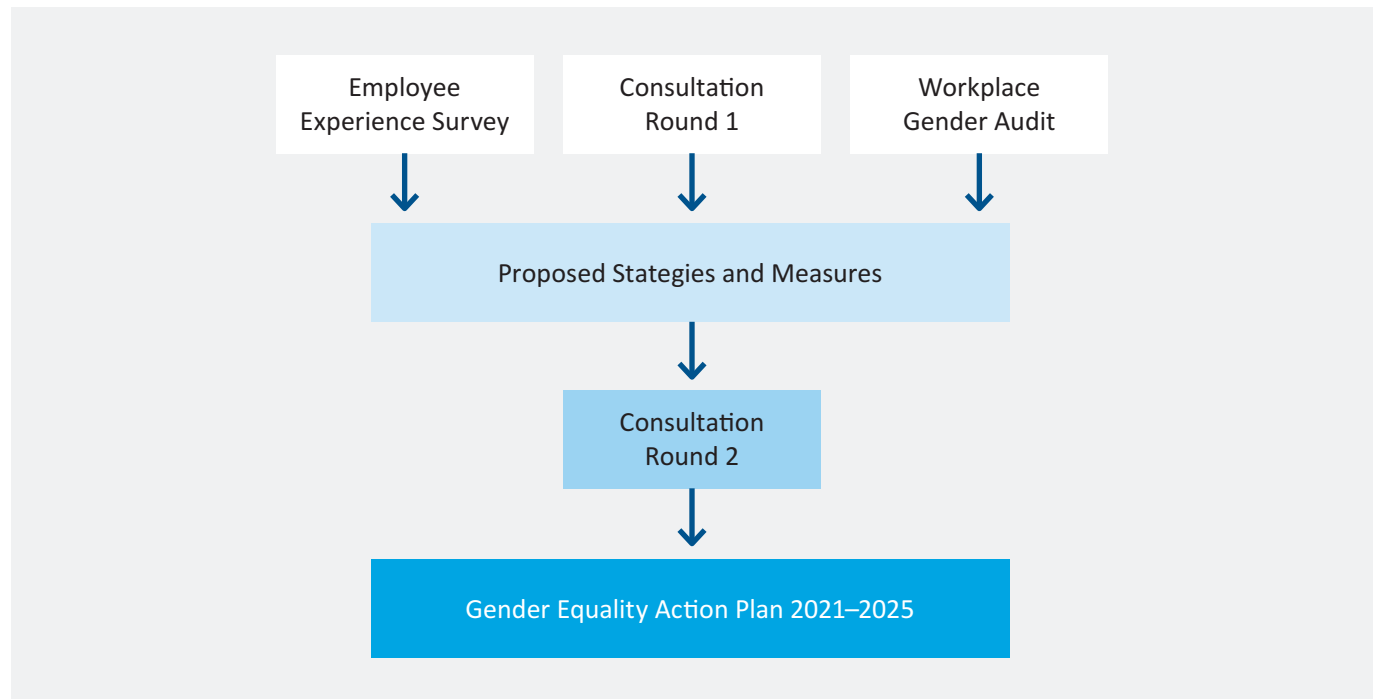
However, our data regarding intersectional gender equality is limited by our current workforce data collection protocols and system configurations, and often the number of respondents to employee experience surveys within certain demographic categories are below the minimum reporting threshold for privacy reasons.

Where intersectional gender equality insights have been available, we have ensured they are considered within our Gender Equality Action Plan. In addition, we have taken a deliberate strategy of considering broader diversity and inclusion objectives within many of the initiatives identified within this Plan. This encourages us to continually consider intersectional data and insights, ensures we do not duplicate our efforts unnecessarily, and recognises the value and impact of taking an integrated approach to building a safer and more respectful workplace.

⁵ Section 6 (8) Gender Equality Act 2020 (Victoria)

The development process

Our Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) was developed through a process of exploration and consultation, as outlined below:



Employee experience survey

Employee experience data was obtained through the roll-out of a People Matter survey designed specifically to support the Gender Equality Action Plan development process. The survey was administered by the Victorian Public Sector Commission (VPSC) and focussed on employee experiences and opinions related to gender inequality, and associated work environment factors. The survey was open for responses from 31 May to 02 July 2021. 419 staff responded to the survey, representing a response rate of 34%.

When reviewing employee experience data contained within this report, please note that the survey results group together respondents who identify as non-binary, self-describe their gender, and prefer not to disclose their gender. Whilst this approach is necessary to protect the privacy of respondents where there is a small sample size, it does mean we are unable to separate the experience of our gender diverse staff from those who chose not to disclose their gender. Between 6% and 9% of respondents selected 'prefer not to say' across a range of demographic factors within the survey, including gender, level of education, sexual orientation, cultural identity and religion.

Workplace gender audit

A range of workforce data was obtained, organised and submitted to the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, using a standardised reporting format. The data revealed insights across seven gender equality indicators, as outlined below.

1. Gender composition at 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, irrespective of gender
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 work arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities
7. Gendered segregation within the workplace



Photo: L-R: Anna Vella, Aaron Gerrard, Adis Cindrak and Bronya Laskovsky in a staff Finance team meeting

Our Workplace Gender Audit data was primarily obtained from our Human Resources Information System. Some workforce data requested in the audit is not currently collected and / or captured at the City of Whittlesea, or was unable to be accurately reported, including:

- Staff who identify as a person with a disability
- Staff cultural identity
- Staff religion
- Staff sexual orientation
- Promotions
- Secondments

Exploring these workforce data gaps and developing a rectification plan to improve data accessibility and accuracy across these areas is a strategy outlined within this Gender Equality Action Plan.

Consultation

City of Whittlesea consulted with staff, union representatives, staff representative groups (the Staff Disability Advisory Group, the Pride Working Group and the Aboriginal Staff Network), the Panel of Administrators (performing the functions of Council), the Senior Leadership Team and the Executive Leadership Team throughout the development of this Gender Equality Action Plan. Across two rounds of consultation, 17 workshops were facilitated, with additional feedback received outside of these consultation workshops.

During the first round of consultation in 2021, feedback was sought from participants regarding what gender equality means to them, their experiences and suggested areas of improvement. During the second round of consultation in 2022, participants learned about the key insights from the Workplace Gender Audit and People Matter survey and provided feedback on the proposed strategies and measures.

Feedback received during the first round of consultation led to the identification of five themes that represent what gender equality means to our workforce.

1. Fairness
2. Equal opportunity
3. Safety
4. Respect
5. Representation

These themes were then used to organise and explore proposed strategies and measures during the second round of consultation and will continue to feature in our internal communications throughout the implementation phase.

“How amazing would it be if we lived in a world where everyone is equal, without discrimination. It doesn't just benefit women. Men also benefit from gender equality. We all benefit as a community”

Andrew Morrison – Aboriginal Employment & Cultural Safety Officer

Insights, strategies, and measures

Indicator



Indicator 1 Gender composition of all levels of the workforce



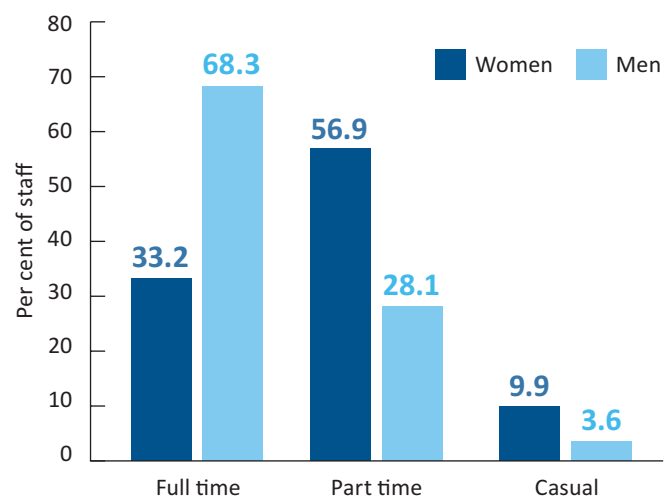
64% women
36% men
<1% self-described

Women are well-represented at the City of Whittlesea, making up 64% of our workforce. Staff who are gender diverse make up less than 1% of our workforce according to the data held in our Human Resources Information System. This has limited the audit insights we have been able to collect and report (for privacy reasons) regarding gender diverse staff. However, data from recent anonymous employee surveys suggest that our official employee data underestimates the number of staff who are gender diverse or self-describe.

“Through my position in the Women Building Surveying Program and my mid-life career change, I hope to encourage and inspire others to break patterns, dare to dream and remove any self limiting beliefs that may be associated with unconscious bias”

Wendy Turner – Student Building Surveyor

At the City of Whittlesea (Council) women are much more likely to work part-time and casually in comparison to men, which means women represent 59% of our workforce when expressed in Equivalent Full Time (EFT) terms.



Graph interpretation example:

68.3% of men are employed full-time compared to 33.2% of women

A greater proportion of men are employed in leadership roles, particularly at the middle management level, when compared to women. However, as women make up a greater proportion of our total workforce, women occupy at least 50% of positions at most levels.

| | % of total women employed at this level | % of total men employed at this level | % of positions at this level filled by women | % of positions at this level filled by men |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Senior leaders (CEO, Director, Department Manager) | 1.8 | 3 | 52 | 48 |
| Middle management (Unit Manager, Coordinator, Supervisor) | 10.8 | 17.2 | 52 | 48 |
| Sole contributors (Officers, School Crossing Supervisors) | 87.4 | 79.8 | 66 | 34 |

Table interpretation example:

17.2% of men are employed in middle management roles, compared to 10.8% of women. Of staff employed in middle management roles, 48% are men and 52% are women.

Employee experience data obtained via the People Matter Survey tells us that 74% of City of Whittlesea respondents agree with the statement *'There is a positive culture within my organisation in relation to employees of different sexes / genders'*. This compares to the overall Local Council result of 76%.



Strategies and measures

- 1.1 Develop a mentorship approach for key talent identified through succession planning, ensuring at least 50% of mentors are women
- 1.2 Review recruitment training content to ensure effective coverage of gender equality, diversity, and inclusion matters, including unconscious bias
- 1.3 Establish recruitment metrics and an associated reporting process to ensure that gender balance is considered and monitored

- 1.4 Provide Department Managers with gender composition data for their workforce by 30 June 2022, and at least annually thereafter, to inform the identification of targeted actions

Shaping our gender composition profile relies on our recruitment and promotion practices (indicator 5), and therefore some of the above strategies and measures are also relevant to Indicator 5.

Insights, strategies, and measures

Indicator

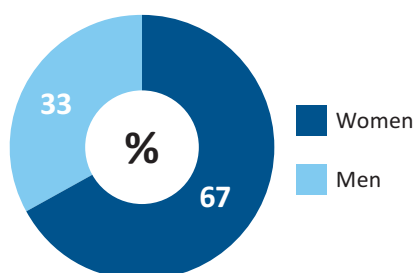


Indicator 2 Gender composition of governing bodies



Insights

Gender composition of governing body



Within the Local Government sector, the governing body is typically comprised of the Mayor and Councillors. On Friday 19 June 2020, a Panel of Administrators was appointed to the City of Whittlesea by the Acting Minister for Local Government. The Panel of Administrators undertake the duties of the Council of the City of Whittlesea until the October 2024 Local Government Election.

Whilst noting that the City of Whittlesea does not control the gender composition of either the current Panel of Administrators or democratically elected Councillors, currently our governing body is comprised of 67% women, and 33% men. City of Whittlesea recognise the value for our community and our workforce of diverse representation in Council.

We also note the importance of diverse gender representation within our Executive Leadership Team. Conscious efforts in recent years have resulted in an improved gender profile, with women occupying 57% of Executive Leadership Team positions as at 30 June 2021.



Strategies and measures

- 2.1 Ensure Councillors complete effective gender equality, diversity, inclusion and sexual harassment training as part of their induction program
- 2.2 Apply a gender and diversity lens to the development and implementation of the Community Leadership Program, a capacity building program which includes a focus on civic leadership



Insights, strategies, and measures

Indicator

3



Indicator 3 Gender pay equity



Insights

Due to the complex nature and gender distribution of our workforce, organisational gender pay equity figures vary according to the calculation method used. Most calculation methods reveal that our gender pay equity gap is relatively small, and in most cases in favour of women.

| | % in favour of women | % in favour of men |
|---|----------------------|--------------------|
| Mean (average) base salary pay gap | 0.28 | – |
| Mean (average) total remuneration gap <i>including casual loading</i> | 0.7 | – |
| Mean (average) total remuneration gap <i>excluding casual loading</i> | – | 1.1 |
| Median (mid-point) base salary pay gap | 13.1 | – |
| Median (mid-point) total remuneration gap <i>including casual loading</i> | 2.8 | – |
| Median (mid-point) total remuneration gap <i>excluding casual loading</i> | 3.3 | – |

The median base salary pay gap of 13.1% in favour of women stands out as an outlier amongst the other pay gap measures. Our analysis of this outlier reveals that the measure is heavily influenced by the gender profile of our workforce. 41.3% of men in our workforce are employed in our lowest three classification levels, compared to 26.48% of women in our workforce. The median total remuneration pay gap is not nearly as significant as the median base salary gap, because several high-volume roles in the lowest three classification levels attract additional allowances and overtime.

For the reasons explained above, the median gender pay gap measure is not the most useful gender equality measure in our organisation in the short to medium-term. If we can tackle gender segregation in our workforce and over time shift our gender profile, we may see a small and gradual change in the median base salary gender pay gap. In the meantime, we will focus primarily on the mean gender pay gap measures.

An analysis of mean gender pay gaps by standardised levels (as defined under the Workplace Gender Audit guidelines) reveals that a gender pay gap in favour of women exists at sole contributor and entry-level leadership roles. In more senior leadership positions, the pay gap is in favour of men. The largest gender pay gaps are at Unit Manager (-3) level and Supervisor level (-5). The Supervisor level pay gap is mostly explained by the wide spread of classifications within the level.

If we take this analysis further to explore gender pay gaps at each classification level under our Enterprise Agreement, gender pay gaps are very minimal at all classifications, except for Band 8 where there is 5.59% pay gap in favour of men. The majority of roles classified at Band 8 sit at the Unit Manager (-3) level, although some senior technical sole contributor roles are also classified as Band 8.

Mean (average) base salary gender pay gap, by level

| | % in favour of women | % in favour of men |
|--|----------------------|--------------------|
| Executive (level -1) | | 2.36 |
| Department Manager (level -2) | | 0.84 |
| Unit Manager (level -3) | | 6.51 |
| Coordinator (level -4) | 1.96 | |
| Supervisor (level -5) | 5.57 | |
| Officer (level -6) | 2.92 | |
| <i>School Crossing Supervisor (level -7)</i> | 0.04 | |



Strategies and measures

- 3.1 Reduce the mean base salary gender pay gap at the Unit Manager level with the aim of progressing towards gender pay parity
- 3.2 Include gender pay equity considerations in recruitment training, advice, and resources for leaders
- 3.3 Conduct an annual gender-based pay audit

Insights, strategies, and measures

Indicator

4



Indicator 4 Sexual harassment in the workplace



Insights

1 formal sexual harassment complaint received in FY 20/21

One sexual harassment incident was formally reported to City of Whittlesea in the period 01 July 2020 to 30 June 2021. However, employee experience data from the People Matter survey reveals that 7% of respondents experienced sexual harassment behaviours at work in the previous twelve months. This suggests a significant gap between incidence and reporting.

Percentage of people matter survey respondents who experienced sexual harassment behaviours at work in the previous 12 months

| % Women | % Men | % Self-described + Non-binary + Prefer not to say | % City of Whittlesea Overall | % Local Council Overall |
|---------|-------|---|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 6 | 5 | 15 | 7 | 7 |

Results of a Sexual Harassment in Local Government survey administered by the Victorian Auditor-General's Officer (VAGO) in 2020 suggested an even higher incidence of sexual harassment behaviours experienced in the workplace (27% of respondents) and revealed that 98% of respondents who experienced sexual harassment did not make a formal complaint. 58% of respondents who did not make a complaint said they didn't think the behaviour was serious enough.³

³ Victorian Auditor-General's Office 2020, Sexual Harassment in Local Government – Survey results for Whittlesea, page 7

The People Matter survey employee experience data also reveals that some demographic cohorts are more likely to experience sexual harassment behaviours at the City of Whittlesea, including staff who identify as having a disability, younger staff, staff who follow a religion other than Christianity, and staff who are gender diverse, self-describe their gender or prefer not to disclose their gender.

Employee experience data also provides us with some information about staff's perception of organisational cultural elements related to sexual harassment behaviour. Women's perceptions of these cultural elements are notably less positive than men in all cases. Staff who are gender diverse, self-describe their gender or prefer not to disclose their gender (a combined response group for the purpose of the People Matter survey) report a significantly worse perception of these cultural elements.

Percentage of people matter survey respondents who agreed with the following statements

| Gender | | | | |
|--|-------|---|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| % Women | % Men | % Self-described + Non-binary + Prefer not to say | % City of Whittlesea Overall | % Local Council Overall |
| <i>I feel safe to challenge inappropriate behaviour at work</i> | | | | |
| 67 | 78 | 36 | 68 | 70 |
| <i>My organisation takes steps to eliminate bullying, harassment, and discrimination</i> | | | | |
| 60 | 81 | 38 | 65 | 66 |
| <i>My organisation encourages respectful workplace behaviours</i> | | | | |
| 78 | 89 | 62 | 80 | 83 |



Strategies and measures

- 4.1 Review sexual harassment policies and processes (Code of Conduct and Staff Complaints Policy), ensuring that a range of safe reporting and support options are available, and that associated information and resources are easily accessible
- 4.2 Review organisational sexual harassment training and education programs for leaders and staff, ensuring the content is tailored to the City of Whittlesea policy and process and covers bystander responsibilities and intersectional insights
- 4.3 Increase the number of Peer Support Officers and improve the diversity profile of this network
- 4.4 Ensure Peer Support Officers receive effective sexual harassment training

Insights, strategies, and measures

Indicator

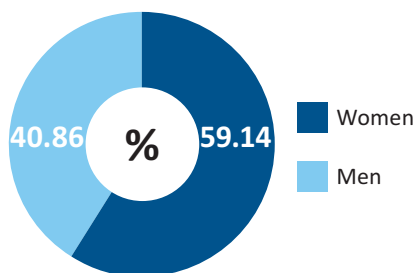


Indicator 5 Recruitment and promotion



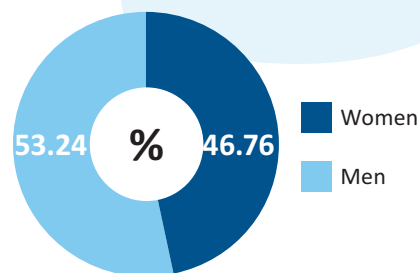
Insights

Gender composition of new recruits FY 20/21



In the period 01 July 2020 to 30 June 2021, 59.14% of recruits were women compared to 40.86% men. These figures are consistent with the proportion of women and men exiting the organisation within the same period. 67% of people recruited into Executive level roles during the 2020/2021 financial year were women, resulting in a balancing of the gender composition at this level.

Gender composition of higher duties recipients FY 20/21



More men than women received higher duties payments during the period 01 July 2020 to 30 June 2021, despite women making up 64% of the workforce. Higher duties payments can, in some circumstances, be an indicator of future promotion potential, and represent a form of career development, so this is an important insight to explore further in relation to gender equality in promotion practices.

We are unable to provide reliable data on internal promotions and secondments due to the current configuration of our Human Resources Information System and associated processes. We will seek to improve the accessibility and reliability of promotion data over the life of this plan.

Our employee experience data offers some insights regarding staff perceptions of our recruitment and promotion processes, and barriers to success at the City of Whittlesea. Notably, women responded less favourably than men to each of the statements outlined below. Respondents who identified as gender diverse, self-describe their gender or prefer not to disclose their gender, responded far less favourably, consistent with patterns identified across a range of employee experience data.

Percentage of people matter survey respondents who agreed with the following statements

| Gender | | | | |
|--|-------|---|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| % Women | % Men | % Self-described + Non-binary + Prefer not to say | % City of Whittlesea Overall | % Local Council Overall |
| <i>My organisation makes fair recruitment and promotion decisions, based on merit</i> | | | | |
| 49 | 62 | 21 | 50 | 54 |
| <i>I feel I have an equal chance at promotion in my organisation</i> | | | | |
| 45 | 62 | 13 | 47 | 51 |
| <i>Gender is not a barrier to success in my organisation</i> | | | | |
| 68 | 81 | 33 | 69 | 74 |
| <i>Being Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander is not a barrier to success in my organisation</i> | | | | |
| 67 | 77 | 44 | 68 | 66 |
| <i>Cultural background is not a barrier to success in my organisation</i> | | | | |
| 70 | 83 | 41 | 71 | 74 |
| <i>Sexual orientation is not a barrier to success in my organisation</i> | | | | |
| 74 | 80 | 38 | 73 | 74 |
| <i>Disability is not a barrier to success in my organisation</i> | | | | |
| 61 | 81 | 44 | 66 | 59 |
| <i>Age is not a barrier to success in my organisation</i> | | | | |
| 60 | 66 | 23 | 58 | 66 |

Insights, strategies, and measures

Approximately 51% of our workforce participated in some form of formal career development training during the period 01 July 2020 to 30 June 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions, the 20/21 financial year saw reduced training activity overall in comparison to pre-COVID levels. Across all our career development programs, 68.4% of participants were women and 31.1% were men.

Career development training participation 01 July 2020 to 30 June 2021

| | % Participation rate of total women in workforce | % Participation rate of total men in workforce | % Proportion of participants – women | % Proportion of participants – men |
|--|--|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| General Career Development training | 53.6 | 42.2 | 68.8 | 30.7 |
| Emerging Leaders Program | 1.7 | 2.7 | 52 | 48 |
| Diploma of Project Management | 2.3 | 4.1 | 50 | 50 |
| Financial Study Assistance recipients* | 1 | 0.5 | 80 | 20 |

* Staff who received a Study Assistance payment in the 20/21 financial year only



Strategies and measures

- 5.1 Develop an Inclusive Recruitment Plan, including the establishment of gender and diversity recruitment metrics and associated reporting processes, the exploration of blind recruitment process options, and the development of guidelines for identifying roles for targeted groups
 - 5.2 Review recruitment processes and systems to ensure gender equality principles are embedded and insights are addressed
 - 5.3 Review recruitment training content to ensure effective coverage of gender equality, diversity, and inclusion matters, including unconscious bias
 - 5.4 Review practices surrounding the allocation of higher duties opportunities as part of the development of a succession planning framework
 - 5.5 Develop a mentorship approach for key talent identified through succession planning, ensuring at least 50% of mentors are women
- Please note, as our recruitment and promotion practices influence the gender composition of our workforce, some of the above strategies and measures are also listed against Indicator 1.



Insights, strategies, and measures

Indicator



Indicator 6 Leave and flexibility



Insights

% of staff with formal flexible working arrangements

9% women **4%** men **7%** of all staff

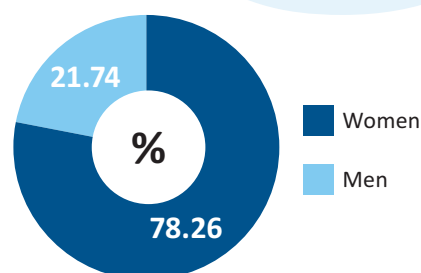
At the City of Whittlesea, formal flexible working arrangements are typically put in place where staff request a flexible work practice that alters the working arrangements outlined in their contract of employment. Examples of flexible work practices that may be subject to formal flexible working agreements include compressed working hours, flexible working hours, remote working, hybrid working and job sharing. Formal flexible working arrangements usually apply for a set period (usually 6 or 12 months) before being subject to a review, to ensure the flexible practice continues to meet the needs of the staff member, the organisation and the community we serve.

9% of women and 4% of men at the City of Whittlesea have formal flexible working arrangements in place. Of staff with formal flexible working arrangements in place, 79.78% are women and 20.22% are men.

Many more City of Whittlesea staff have been working remotely and flexibly since 2020 due to the restrictions and recommendations associated with the COVID pandemic. We anticipate that the number of formal flexible working arrangements will rise once all staff are able to return to the office for a consistent period, and a need arises to determine and formalise their flexible working arrangement.

23.6% of formal flexible work agreements apply to leadership roles and 76.4% apply to sole contributor roles. Only 15.3% of our workforce occupy leadership positions. This data contradicts some staff perceptions (communicated throughout consultation), that flexible work arrangements are less available in leadership positions.

Gender composition of staff who took parental leave FY 20/21



78.26% of staff who took parental leave in the period 01 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 were women, and 21.74% were men. On average women took 16.23 weeks of paid parental leave, compared to an average of 2.62 weeks for men. This suggests that parental leave is largely taken in a gendered way, i.e. women taking primary responsibility for the care of children upon birth or placement. No staff exited the organisation whilst on parental leave during the period 01 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

Employee experience data from the People Matter survey provides some insight into the perceptions of staff regarding organisational support for flexible work practices and leave.

| Gender | | | | |
|--|-------|---|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| % Women | % Men | % Self-described + Non-binary + Prefer not to say | % City of Whittlesea Overall | % Local Council Overall |
| <i>My organisation would support me if I needed to take family violence leave</i> | | | | |
| 92 | 89 | 62 | 89 | 85 |
| <i>I am confident that if I requested a flexible work arrangement, it would be given due consideration</i> | | | | |
| 85 | 83 | 67 | 82 | 75 |
| <i>My organisation supports employees with family or other caring responsibilities, regardless of gender</i> | | | | |
| 81 | 88 | 56 | 81 | 82 |

Staff perception of workplace flexibility differs according to their employment type. 75% of survey respondents who work full-time responded favourably to the Workplace Flexibility survey items in the People Matter Survey, compared to 64% of respondents who work part-time. This highlights the importance of focussing on the experience of flexibility, and not just the utilisation of flexible working practices.

| Employment type | | | |
|---|-------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| % Full-time | % Part-time | % City of Whittlesea Overall | % Local Council Overall |
| <i>There is a positive culture within my organisation in relation to employees who have family responsibilities</i> | | | |
| 76 | 63 | 72 | 71 |
| <i>There is a positive culture within my organisation in relation to employees who use flexible work arrangements</i> | | | |
| 72 | 60 | 68 | 65 |
| <i>Using flexible work arrangements is not a barrier to success in my organisation</i> | | | |
| 67 | 51 | 62 | 61 |



Strategies and measures

- 6.1 Seek to embed Gender Equality Action Plan insights and focus areas, and broader diversity and inclusion objectives, during the next Enterprise Agreement review
- 6.2 Review the Flexible Working policy and supporting information and resources to enhance gender equality outcomes, including embedding reason-neutral language
- 6.3 Develop a flexible work communication and promotion plan, focusing on promoting a variety of flexible working arrangements using varied stories and examples
- 6.4 Review the wording contained in job advertisements regarding flexible work practices, as a part of the development of an Inclusive Recruitment Plan and in alignment with our Employee Value Proposition
- 6.5 Improve the quality and availability of information and resources regarding Family Violence Leave
- 6.6 Establish a benchmark result for the Employee Engagement survey item *“we are genuinely supported if we choose to make use of flexible working arrangements”* and track results annually
- 6.7 Establish benchmark results for the Employee Engagement survey item *“generally, I believe my workload is reasonable for my role”*, by hours type (part-time / full-time / casual) to ensure the experience of staff working part-time is considered and monitored
- 6.8 Increase the proportion of men with formal flexible working arrangements in place by 30 June 2025
- 6.9 Explore childcare experiences and support options for staff

“ I want to live in a world where all staff can genuinely find a work life balance. Where people feel supported and encouraged to fulfill their career goals regardless of the industry they work in and I will continue to support the women in my team to find that balance ”

Simone Chetwynd-Brown – Unit Manager Resource Recovery



Insights, strategies, and measures

Indicator

7

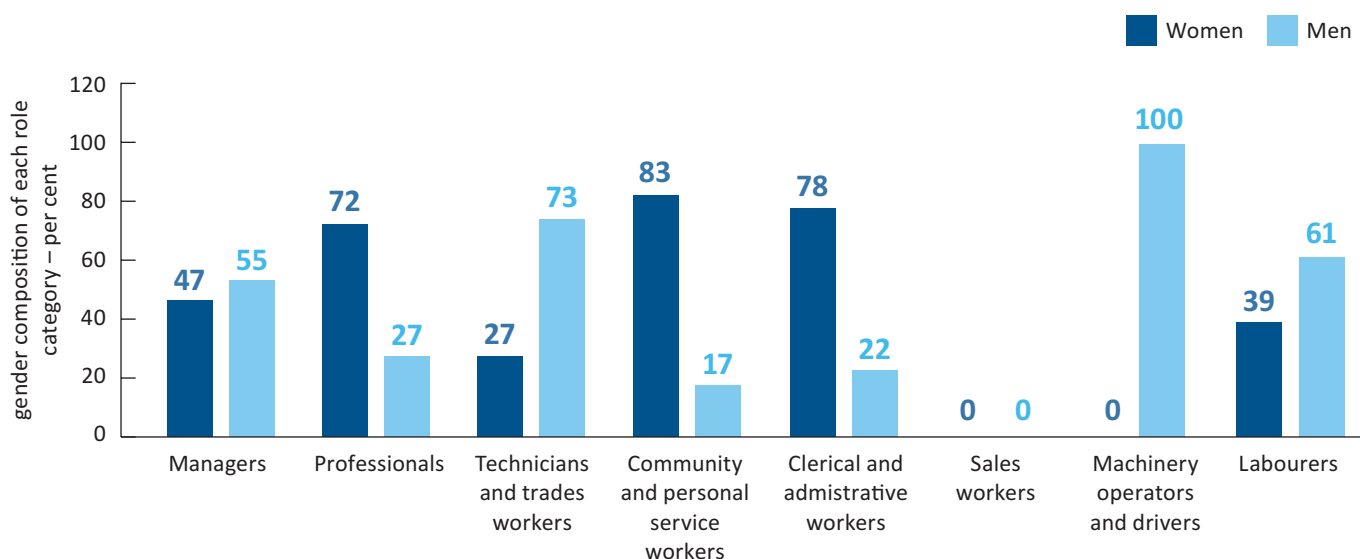


Indicator 7 Gendered segregation



Insights

Occupational gender segregation refers to the tendency for women and men to work in different occupations. That is, for a group of similar roles to be heavily represented by one gender. At the City of Whittlesea, many of our roles are gender segregated. An analysis of our gender profile against ANZSCO code major occupational groups shows that women are much more likely to work in Clerical and Administrative, Community and Personal Service and Professional roles, whereas men are much more likely to be employed in Labourer, Machinery Operation and Technician and Trade Worker roles.



This gender segregation significantly influences our gender composition outcomes, and our gender pay equity outcomes. Moving towards a more even gender balance within gender segregated role types will require long-term action and effort.

Employee experience data from the People Matter survey provides us with some information regarding staff perceptions of cultural elements related to gender segregation.

| Gender | | | | |
|--|-------|---|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| % Women | % Men | % Self-described + Non-binary + Prefer not to say | % City of Whittlesea Overall | % Local Council Overall |
| <i>My organisation uses inclusive and respectful images and language</i> | | | | |
| 81 | 89 | 51 | 81 | 82 |
| <i>In my workgroup work is allocated fairly, regardless of gender</i> | | | | |
| 81 | 89 | 67 | 82 | 82 |



Strategies and measures

- 7.1 Explore a talent segmentation approach within the Inclusive Recruitment Plan, to ensure recruitment strategies and metrics are targeted to the challenges and diversity profiles of each talent segment
- 7.2 Review our image library as part of the development of an Inclusive Communications & Engagement Protocol with an aim of increasing the number of diverse images available, including images that defy gender stereotypes and norms
- 7.3 Proactively seek mentors who represent a minority gender within gender segregated teams or roles when developing the mentorship program for key talent
- 7.4 Provide dedicated support to Managers with highly gender-segregated workforces (75%+) to assist with the exploration of data and the identification of strategies to improve the diversity of their gender profile



Photo: Home Support client Vicki with Home Support Worker Giovanna Ciccone

Other strategies and measures

In addition to the strategies and measures aligned to each gender equality indicator, as outlined above, there are several other strategies and measures City of Whittlesea commit to which serve the aims of the Gender Equality Action Plan and the gender equality principles in the Gender Equality Act 2020. Many of these additional strategies relate to building a culture that embeds diversity and inclusion into our everyday practices.

- 8.1 Review organisational Diversity and Inclusion training programs and offerings for staff and leadership
- 8.2 Review organisational Family Violence training programs for relevant staff, including Peer Support Officers
- 8.3 Assess and improve organisational support structures for staff-led groups representing diversity and inclusion interests, including the establishment of a feedback pathway with the Executive and Senior Leadership Teams e.g. Pride Working Group, Staff Disability Advisory Group, Aboriginal Staff Network
- 8.4 Build the knowledge, skills and capacity of the organisation to apply Gender Impact Assessments on strategies, policies, programs and services that have direct and significant impacts on community
- 8.5 Ensure a minimum of 80% of nominated People and Culture team members complete appropriate Gender Impact Assessment / gender lens / diversity lens training to ensure workforce initiatives developed and advice provided consider diversity and gender equality aims and outcomes
- 8.6 Provide data analysis training, primarily targeted at leaders, to assist with the usage and interpretation of workforce data (including gender and diversity data)
- 8.7 Audit the Human Resources Information System configuration and workforce data processes to ensure improved accessibility and availability of data required for Workforce Planning and the Workplace Gender Audit (including intersectional data)
- 8.8 Establish a standard protocol for the recording of gender and demographic information within workforce surveys (e.g. engagement survey, pulse survey)
- 8.9 Develop a communication and promotion plan to ensure that staff (including leaders) are familiar with the insights, actions and objectives of the Gender Equality Action Plan and kept abreast of progress throughout the life of the Plan

“The kind of work environment that empowers and enables women to succeed, treats people as equals and allows people to feel safe and comfortable is exactly the type of environment we all thrive in”

Tom Heib – Manager Customer Experience

Resourcing our plan

In 2021, as a response to the Gender Equality Action Plan requirements contained in the Gender Equality Act 2020 and the workforce planning requirements contained in the Local Government Act 2020, the new position of Workforce Planning, Diversity and Inclusion Officer was established for a period of four years.

The initial four-year term of the position provides us with the opportunity to review resourcing needs and position requirements with the knowledge and experience gained during this first planning cycle.

The Workforce Planning, Diversity and Inclusion Officer will oversee progress against the Gender Equality Action Plan and lead allocated Plan initiatives. Other initiatives within the Plan will be allocated to existing staff members across our Organisational Development, Human Resources, Safety and Wellbeing and Equity and Health Planning teams. The Chief Executive Officer is ultimately accountable for ensuring progress is made against this Gender Equality Action Plan.

It is anticipated that approximately \$130,000 will be required to fund the roll-out of training programs contained within this Plan. However, the exact structure, reach and costs of the training programs can only be determined following a full review of content and approach, as committed to in this Plan.

The table below details the estimated direct resource and cost investment associated with bringing this Plan to life. We also acknowledge the significant and necessary contributions of staff who will provide less direct support to these initiatives, including all people leaders, our Peer Support Officer network, payroll and data specialists, and those involved in monitoring progress.

| Investment | Indicative average FTE investment in each year of plan | Estimated cost over life of plan (2021–2025) |
|---|--|--|
| Workforce Planning, Diversity & Inclusion Officer | 0.3 | \$149,165 |
| Organisational Development team | 1.1 | \$503,926 |
| Human Resources team | 0.8 | \$347,757 |
| Safety and Wellbeing team | 0.05 | \$19,770 |
| Equity and Health Planning team | 0.2 | \$87,510 |
| Training content development and delivery | – | \$130,000 |
| TOTAL | 2.45 | \$1,238,128 |



Photo: Irosha Sam and Lisa Embling outside the Civic Centre

Measuring our progress

Progress against this Plan will be regularly monitored by the Workforce Planning Committee, consisting of senior leader representatives from across the organisation. Progress will be formally reported to our Senior Leadership Team and Executive Leadership Team every two years, in alignment with progress reporting requirements contained with the Gender Equality Act 2020.

In addition, annual employee engagement survey results, regular employee pulse survey results and an annual gender-based pay audit will serve as markers of progress throughout the life of the Plan.

The first formal Progress Report is due on 31 October 2023. The next Gender Equality Action Plan is due on 31 October 2025.

Appendix 1 – Strategies and measures summary

Indicator #1 – Gender composition of the workforce

| | |
|-----|--|
| 1.1 | Develop a mentorship approach for key talent identified through succession planning, ensuring at least 50% of mentors are women (see also 5.5) |
| 1.2 | Review recruitment training content to ensure effective coverage of gender equality, diversity, and inclusion matters, including unconscious bias (see also 5.3) |
| 1.3 | Establish recruitment metrics and an associated reporting process to ensure that gender balance is considered and monitored (see also 5.1) |
| 1.4 | Provide Department Managers with gender composition data for their workforce by 30 June 2022, and at least annually thereafter, to inform the identification of targeted actions |

Indicator #2 – Gender composition of the governing body

| | |
|-----|---|
| 2.1 | Ensure Councillors complete effective gender equality, diversity, inclusion and sexual harassment training as part of their induction program |
| 2.2 | Apply a gender and diversity lens to the development and implementation of the Community Leadership Program, a capacity building program which includes a focus on civic leadership |

Indicator #3 – Gender Pay Equity

| | |
|-----|--|
| 3.1 | Reduce the mean base salary gender pay gap at the Unit Manager level to less than 4% by October 2025 |
| 3.2 | Include gender pay equity considerations in recruitment training, advice, and resources for leaders |
| 3.3 | Conduct an annual gender-based pay audit |

Indicator #4 – Sexual harassment in the workplace

| | |
|-----|--|
| 4.1 | Review sexual harassment policies and processes (Code of Conduct and Staff Complaints Policy), ensuring that a range of safe reporting and support options are available, and that associated information and resources are easily accessible |
| 4.2 | Review organisational sexual harassment training and education programs for leaders and staff, ensuring the content is tailored to the City of Whittlesea policy and process and covers bystander responsibilities and intersectional insights |
| 4.3 | Increase the number of Peer Support Officers and improve the diversity profile of this network |
| 4.4 | Ensure Peer Support Officers receive effective sexual harassment training |

Indicator #5 – Recruitment and promotion

| | |
|-----|---|
| 5.1 | Develop an Inclusive Recruitment Plan, including the establishment of gender and diversity recruitment metrics and associated reporting processes, the exploration of blind recruitment process options, and the development of guidelines for identifying roles for targeted groups (see also 1.3) |
| 5.2 | Review recruitment processes and systems to ensure gender equality principles are embedded and insights are addressed |
| 5.3 | Review recruitment training content to ensure effective coverage of gender equality, diversity, and inclusion matters, including unconscious bias (see also 1.2) |
| 5.4 | Review practices surrounding the allocation of higher duties opportunities as part of the development of a succession planning framework |
| 5.5 | Develop a mentorship approach for key talent identified through succession planning, ensuring at least 50% of mentors are women (see also 1.1) |

Indicator #6 – Leave and flexibility

| | |
|-----|--|
| 6.1 | Seek to embed Gender Equality Action Plan insights and focus areas, and broader diversity and inclusion objectives, during the next Enterprise Agreement review |
| 6.2 | Review the Flexible Working policy and supporting information and resources to enhance gender equality outcomes, including embedding reason-neutral language |
| 6.3 | Develop a flexible work communication and promotion plan, focusing on promoting a variety of flexible working arrangements using varied stories and examples |
| 6.4 | Review the wording contained in job advertisements regarding flexible work practices, as a part of the development of an Inclusive Recruitment Plan and in alignment with our Employee Value Proposition |
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| 6.7 | Establish benchmark results for the Employee Engagement survey item “generally, I believe my workload is reasonable for my role”, by hours type (part-time / full-time / casual) to ensure the experience of staff working part-time is considered and monitored |
| 6.8 | Increase the proportion of men with formal flexible working arrangements in place by 30 June 2025 |
| 6.9 | Explore childcare experiences and support options for staff |

Indicator #7 – Gendered segregation

| | |
|-----|--|
| 7.1 | Explore a talent segmentation approach within the Inclusive Recruitment Plan, to ensure recruitment strategies and metrics are targeted to the challenges and diversity profiles of each talent segment |
| 7.2 | Review our image library as part of the development of an Inclusive Communications & Engagement Protocol with an aim of increasing the number of diverse images available, including images that defy gender stereotypes and norms |
| 7.3 | Proactively seek mentors who represent a minority gender within gender segregated teams or roles when developing the mentorship program for key talent |
| 7.4 | Provide dedicated support to Managers with highly gender-segregated workforces (75%+) to assist with the exploration of data and the identification of strategies to improve the diversity of their gender profile |

Other strategies and measures

| | |
|-----|--|
| 8.1 | Review organisational Diversity and Inclusion training programs and offerings for staff and leadership |
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| 8.7 | Audit the Human Resources Information System configuration and workforce data processes to ensure improved accessibility and availability of data required for Workforce Planning and the Workplace Gender Audit (including intersectional data) |
| 8.8 | Establish a standard protocol for the recording of gender and demographic information within workforce surveys (e.g. engagement survey, pulse survey) |
| 8.9 | Develop a communication and promotion plan to ensure that staff (including leaders) are familiar with the insights, actions and objectives of the Gender Equality Action Plan and kept abreast of progress throughout the life of the Plan |

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