

Colac Otway Shire Council's

Gender Equality Action Plan

2022-2026



Colac Otway
SHIRE



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“I believe that a stronger and fairer workplace can contribute to a stronger and fairer community.”

I am very proud to present our first ever Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP), which will now be developed every four years.

This is an important document for our organisation as we work towards a more equitable, less discriminatory, fairer and effective workplace. Implementing this plan is not just the right thing to do, but the smart thing to do.

Not only will the work in this area help to improve staff wellbeing and engagement, as well as attract more diversity and innovation of thought, it's also expected the actions in this plan will improve issues that predominately affect women, such as sexual harassment and family violence. I believe that a stronger and fairer workplace can contribute to a stronger and fairer community and I ask that you all join me in this aspiration.

Nearly 1 in 3 women have been abused in their lifetime, yet only 1 in 10 women said they would go to the police for help. By shining a light on this dark area, it's my hope that our colleagues feel comfortable to seek help at work, if there's no other support available.

Within our Council, from our elected representatives and our employees, we have fantastic role models across many traditionally male dominated positions – from office-based engineers to truck drivers. We are also fortunate to have awesome role-models across traditionally female-dominated positions such men working in our Customer Assist and Community Care teams. This Plan has actions that will turn more “role models” into “role-normals”.

I am personally proud to introduce this first GEAP as I can bring first-hand experience to this important work. As a qualified and practicing Civil Engineer, I often received surprised looks when I told people what my career was. They thought it was ‘different’ for a female to be in the role. Working towards gender equality will lead us to a day when no one holds pre-determined views or expectations of genders and roles. Let's aspire to everyone being given equal opportunity to contribute to a safe, inclusive and effective workplace.

This plan will guide us in our goal where everyone is able to access the same opportunities, resources and rewards regardless of gender.

Anne Howard
Chief Executive Officer
Colac Otway Shire Council



1. Introduction:

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

1.1 Why Gender Equity is relevant and important:

The Council is developing this Plan as the implementation of the Action Plan will result in a more equitable, fair and less discriminatory organisation and lead to:

- Improved productivity, economic and social outcomes
- Improved engagement and wellbeing of staff
- Enhanced ability of the Organisation to attract talent and retain employees
- Enhance the Organisation's capacity to innovate in order to solve complex problems during changing conditions, and
- Enhance the ability of the Organisation 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 Vision for Gender Equality 2026:

Council's vision for Gender Equality 2026 is focussed on the Organisation for this first GEAP and will expand to have a greater external focus for the community in future iterations.

The vision is:

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

1.3 Implementing this Plan:

The detailed four-year Action Plan Matrix is the key to making

progress and is set out in Appendix 10.1 of this GEAP.

As per the Gender Equality Act 2020, Council will actively promote gender equality in policies, programs and services that impact on the public by completing ongoing gender impact assessments and report to the Gender Equality Commissioner on its progress towards workplace gender equality.

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

It is acknowledged that further work is required in the collection and analysis of data, updating policy and procedures with a gender equity lens, improving understanding of gender equality issues and improving workplace culture.

Whilst the ultimate goal is to demonstrate best practice and lead by example as one of the Shire's main employers, it is also acknowledged that this will take time to do well.

The detailed four-year Action Plan Matrix is set out in Appendix 10.1 of this Gender Equality Plan.

2. Definitions

2.1 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)

2.2 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)

2.3 Compounded Gender Inequality

Section 6(8) of the GE 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))

3. Strategic Inputs to the Development of the GEAP:

3.1 Council Plan 2021-2025

The Council Plan, incorporating the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan (MHWP), is a result of deliberative engagement with the community and works towards the Community Vision 2050.

The aspects of the Council Plan that are particularly relevant to this Gender Equality Action Plan are:

3.1.1 A Healthy and Inclusive Community:

The Council Plan sets out:

- “We will continue to be a great place to live. We embrace our diverse community, take care of our older community and prepare our children for success. We care for each other, are friendly and welcoming and enjoy a vibrant and active lifestyle. We are a small population with big hearts”.
- “We will provide equal and fair access to services”
- “We will build a culture that is safe and inclusive”.

Further, the Plan sets out key outcomes of the MPHP and links Council outcomes to:

- Improving mental health and well being
- Preventing all forms of violence
- Tackling climate change and its impacts on health
- Increasing active living
- Gender Equity

In relation to Gender Equality specifically, the Council Plan states:

“Council supports the Victorian Government’s vision for all Victorians to live in safe and equal society; have equal access to power, resources and opportunities; and be treated with dignity, respect and fairness.”

In line with our legislated responsibilities under the Gender Equality Act 2020, Council is committed to undertaking a gender impact assessment when developing or reviewing policies, programs and services that have direct and significant impacts on our community.

Practical examples of this includes our work to provide gender-neutral sports facilities or to expand our Family Day Care program to enable more women to remain in, or re-enter the workforce”.

At a finer grained level, the Council Plan sets also out at priorities and proposed KRA’s for measurement and reporting in subsequent annual reports:

- Promote and demonstrate gender equity:
 - » Gender Equality Plan for Council adopted and implemented
 - » New and upgraded community facilities accommodate gender neutral design principles
 - » Community facility fees and charges structures encourage facility users to embrace gender equity
- Diversity is embraced:
 - » Greater than 45% of residents support multiculturalism as measured by Department of Health data
 - » Greater than 57% of residents feel valued by society
 - » Key council documents and communications are provided in accessible formats and multiple languages
 - » Increase in number of community events that celebrate diversity
- Deliver a Reconciliation Action Plan in consultation with Eastern Maar
 - » Reflect RAP delivered by 2022
- Support health, enforcement and other services to deliver initiatives to reduce all forms of violence
 - » Decrease family violence incident rates

As mentioned above the MHWP Plan is incorporated into the Council Plan 2021-2025.

Details of the MHWP Plan are appended to the Council Plan and provide for:

- Promote and demonstrate gender equity
- Complete review of recreation fees and charges schedule, incorporating policy changes to help clubs improve gender equity, cultural diversity, universal access, healthy eating, and reduced tobacco, alcohol and other drug use
- Complete the Gender Equity Plan and embed recommendations within organisational practice and policy frameworks (example, gender equity focus in Council’s Community Grants applications).
- Partner with Women’s Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West and G21 to develop the G21 Respect 2040 Plan which provides a shared vision to address gender equity and prevention of violence against women.

3.2 The link to the Workforce Plan 2022-2025.

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.

The measures set out in this action plan will underpin the development of the Workforce Plan. Reference to the links is contained in both the GEAP Action Plan Matrix and the Workforce Action Plan Matrix.

3.3 Policies and Strategies

The Organisation, led by the CEO, has a range of employee related policies and strategies to ensure the Colac Otway Shire workforce is protected and managed to reduce the incidence of risk and negative behaviours. This is in addition to the development of good culture and leading organisational development and HR practices.

An analysis using a gender impact assessment approach (GIA) needs to be undertaken on existing policies and procedures and compared against industry peers over the period of this Plan. Policies to focus on initially include:

- Grievance Procedure
- Flexible Work Policy and Toolkit
- Sexual Harassment Policy
- Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Health and Well Being Policy
- Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

3.4 Other Victorian and Commonwealth Laws

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

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

- Fair Work Act 2002 (Cth)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic),
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth),
- Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (Cth)
- OHS Act
- Colac Otway Shire EBA No. 8

The CEO, senior management and the Manager People and Culture are responsible for leading, guiding and training all staff in the requirements and expectations under the relevant Acts and legislation.

4. Data Collection and Surveys:

4.1 People Matter Survey

In May 2021, the Council elected to undertake an employee experience survey conducted on behalf of most Victorian Local Government defined entities by the Commissioner for

Gender Equality and the State Government People Matters Survey Team.

A response rate of 23% was achieved against an industry average 32%.

4.2 Workplace Gender Audit

In response to the baseline audit required under the Gender Equality Act, an in-house data base query was developed as at 30 June 2021. A working group was formed comprising key staff from ICT, Payroll and People and Culture Teams to collate the data from a variety of sources.

A key requirement of the Act is to gather and report upon information relating to:

- Gender composition of the workforce and councillor group.
- Gender Pay Equity
- Gender segregation across the organisation
- Sexual Harassment
- Recruitment and promotion practices
- Leave and flexibility availability and utilisation
- Bullying experiences
- Discrimination experiences

Historically, Local Government has not collected intersectional employee diversity data relating to:

- Race
- Culture
- Religion
- Sexual preference / LGBTIQ
- Aboriginality
- Age
- Disability

The Data Working Group developed a smart survey which has collected the intersectional data from a small sample of participants. This innovative move will be built upon in the development of future plans. There needs to be a greater understanding of the compounding effect of disadvantage.

The small sample sizes and significant difficulty in accurately collecting all of the data required from multiple databases will need to be addressed in preparation for future GEAPs.

Data collated by the working group has been incorporated into the analysis section of this plan (Section 5).

4.3 Interviews with Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

Interviews with 18 members of the SLT were undertaken in August 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.

The interviews followed a survey that was completed by all SLT members which provided the basis for the interviews.

The key points gleaned from the interview conversations are incorporated into the data analysis section.



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 to understand the prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace. The response rate for Colac Otway Shire was 25%. Commentary on the survey and other available data on sexual harassment is included in Section 5.5.

The findings were quite confronting for the Organisation.

A subsequent policy and action plan in line with the VAGO's 11 recommendations was developed and implemented in the first quarter of 2021 and has had majority of actions completed. This work has been taken into account in this Gender Equality Action Plan.

4.5 Crowe Internal Audit

Council's Internal Audit Program has a rolling cycle of risk mitigation across the Organisation.

In August 2021 Crowe Audit undertook a Human Resources (HR) Audit with the scope of reviewing HR management practices and procedures along with the controls that have been put in place to minimise related exposures and risks.

Several findings relevant to this Plan been made for action in regard to sexual harassment and internal complaint processes. These have been referenced in this plan.

4.6 People at Work Survey

Further, the OHS Coordinator undertook a survey of staff in August 2021 in relation to a psychological risk assessment. A response rate of 35% was achieved.

Findings relating to bullying have been included in this Plan.

4.7 Culture and Alignment Survey

Lastly, the bi-annual Insync - Alignment and Engagement Survey of all staff was completed in May 2021. The survey resulted in the overall organisation scoring in the second quartile of results for local government.

This was a significant improvement over the 2019 results however there was some variability by departments.

Key findings have been synthesised into this report.

5. Data Analysis:

5.1 General

The data gathered from the sources set out in Section 4 above is summarised and analysed in this section.

Data has been drawn from:

- People Matter Survey
- Workplace Gender Audit
- Interviews with and survey of SLT
- VAGO Sexual Harassment Survey
- Organisational Development Workforce databases
- Best practice published by:
 - » Gender Equality Commission
 - » Women's Health Barwon South West
 - » The Workplace Gender Equality Agency
 - » The Fair Work Ombudsman
 - » Our Watch – Workplace Equality and Respect
 - » Shifting the Focus: Preventing gendered violence and harassment at work and supporting victim – survivors.

Workforce		2021/22
Total Workforce Budget		\$21.7 mil
Total Wordforce Numbers		
Total Headcount		360 staff
EFT		238.4 EFT
Workforce by Gender		
Male (M)		118
Female (F)		120
Self-described (S)		0
Diversity and other characteristics	<i>Note: the following data has been drawn from teh 23% of staff that participated in the People Matters Sruvey. (Added from feedback)</i>	
Age	54% were over 45 years 13% were 25-34	
Length of service	39% of staff tenure greater than 10 years 16% tenure less than 2 years	
Disability	8% have a disability	
Sexual Orientation	87% identified as straight 11% identified as bisexual or gay or lesbian or pansexual 2% identified as asexual or gay or lesbian	
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	1% identified as ATSI	
Languge other than English at home	8% spoke another language	
Cultural Identity	83% Australian 5% European or Asian	
Country of Birth	84% Australia 8% United Kingdom 8% Other	
Diversity and other characteristics		
Caring Responsibilities	32% have school aged children 12% have children at or pre-kinder age 20% of staff are caring for others that are frail, aged, have a medical condition or disability	
Salary	58% of respondents earnt less than \$85,000	
Exit Data - trends	Indicator under development	
Gender Composition	<i>Note: the following is not an analysis by banding level. This will be considered in the workforce plan.</i>	
ANZSCO and by Dept (of note)	<p>Cat 1 - Managers 7 W / 13 M (note: includes facility managers also)</p> <p>Cat 2 - Professionals 46 W / 28 M</p> <p>Cat 3 - Technicians and Trads Workers 0 W / 11 M</p> <p>Cat 4 - Community and Personal Service Workers 90 W / 26 M</p> <p>Cat 5 - Clerical and Administrative Workers 80 W / 23 M</p> <p>Cat 7 - Machinery Operators and Drivers 3 W / 56 M</p> <p>Cat 8 - Cleaners and Labourers 18 W / 8 M</p>	

The data and analysis are presented in the following way:

- High level
 - » Workforce
- Gender Composition of all levels of the Workforce
- Gender Composition of the Council
- Equal Remuneration for work of equal value
- Sexual Harassment in the workplace
- Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace
- Gendered segregation in the workplace
- Bullying

The key elements below are then contained in the Action Plan Matrix in the Appendix 10.1.

5.2 Gender Composition of all levels of the Workforce:

5.2.1 Rationale

Women are often underrepresented in leadership roles, and overrepresented 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. By collecting and reporting data on gender composition at all levels, organisations can see where they could benefit from greater gender diversity and take action to support women into senior roles. (WHBSW 2021)

5.2.2 What the data is telling us

The People Matters Survey sets out that there is a significant gap in relation to a positive culture in the organisation for those who identify as LGBTIQIA+ and also for those who have a disability.

The Baseline survey sets out that as at 30 June the CEO and 3 General Managers were men.

At the time of publishing this report the CEO was a woman.

The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) comprised 4 women and 11 men at the 30 June but is now 7 women and 8 men.

The Organisation is comprised overall by 244 women and 165 men.

The segregation of the workforce by role / classification and further analysis through the application of ANZSCO codes for the categorisation of the workforce is set out later in this report.

5.3 Gender Composition of the Council:

5.3.1 Rationale

Boards, councils, committees of management and other governing bodies make important decisions about finances and strategy. It is important that governing bodies have diverse voices at the table. The Victorian Government has made a commitment that at least 50% of all new appointments to courts and paid government boards will be women. Consistently collecting and reporting this data will help ensure more gender-balanced boardrooms. (WHBSW 2021)

5.3.2 What the data is telling us

As at 30 June 2021 the Council elected in October 2020 comprised of 2 Women and 5 Men. The mayor as chair was a woman.

Whilst the State Government has made a commitment to greater gender balance on boards, this plan will not make recommendations on future balance and diversity profiles for democratically elected councillors.

It is anticipated that the MAV and VLGA will continue to provide leadership on this issue.

5.4 Equal Remuneration for work of equal value:

5.4.1 Rationale

The gender pay gap is persistent in Victoria and as of November 2019 stands at 9.6%. In the Victorian public sector, it is 10%. The gender pay gap is driven by several factors, including the unequal distribution of unpaid care work, higher rates of pay in male-dominated industries, and gender discrimination. By collecting and reporting pay data, organisations can see where pay gaps are largest and identify the underlying causes. (WHBSW 2021)

5.4.2 What the data is telling us

The Baseline survey shows that on a total remuneration basis the median remuneration was favourable to men by 0.9% and the mean remuneration was 8.4 % favourable to men.

There is some hesitancy in considering these numbers to be entirely correct given the difficulty in collection data from different payroll and HR databases. The variation sits at the midpoint of desktop research set out below.

5.4.3 From Desktop Research

WGEA / ABS 2021 statistics set out that:

- Full Time average weekly earnings of women: \$1,575
- Full Time average weekly earnings of men: \$1,837
- Gap (avg week earnings): 14.2 %
- Gap (total earnings include OT and include PT): 31.3 %

A review of sector leaders in Local Government shows that several have made significant progress in gender equality and are taking positive steps to address the gender pay gap.

Further work is required to collect and interpret salary data given the limitations identified above.

The development of common processes across local government to collect and analyse the data via easy-to-use dashboards is one way to start to be able to analyse data, develop strategic actions to address and then close the gaps.

The strategies and actions on possible improvements to equal remuneration across the workforce are contained in the Action Plan Matrix at Appendix 10.1 and also referenced in the Workforce Plan.

5.5 Sexual Harassment in the workplace:

5.5.1 Rationale

Sexual harassment in the workplace is common in Australia, including Victoria. It 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.

By consistently collecting and reporting data on workplace sexual harassment, organisations will be more transparent and accountable to employees and the community. This will build confidence to report experiences of sexual harassment. (WHBSW 2021)

5.5.2 What the data is telling us

The People Matters Survey sets out that 10% of survey respondents at Colac Otway experienced sexual harassment. This is against an industry rate of 7%.

In the year to 30 June 2021, no formal reports were received.

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

The Victorian Auditor General also undertook a Survey of Victorian Local Governments and a report was delivered to each Council in December 2020. Concerningly, the survey found that 81 staff or 24.8% of respondents had experienced sexual harassment at work.

The Organisation responded swiftly with a new stand-alone policy and an 11-point Action Plan in line with the VAGO recommendations.

An internal Audit was undertaken in September 2021 and made several recommendations in relation to the prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace. These include:

- » Reporting of this should be to an appointed Equal Opportunity Officer.
- Management should establish a process for capturing internal complaint data limiting opportunities from reducing complaints from reoccurring.

5.5.3 From Desktop Research

Our Watch – Workplace Equality and Respect is an excellent resource for addressing sexual harassment in Australian workplaces.

Further, Victoria Legal aid, Sexual Assault Victoria and Women’s Health Victoria made a joint submission to address sexual harassment in workplaces. This submission is contained in the paper:

“Shifting the Focus: Preventing gendered violence and harassment at work and supporting victim – survivors”.

The strategies and actions on possible improvements to sexual harassment across the workforce are contained in the Action Plan Matrix at Appendix 10.1 and also referenced in the Workforce Plan.

5.6 Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace:

5.6.1 Rationale

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.

Data on recruitment and promotion outcomes can show where women’s careers are stalling and help identify strategies to create more equal opportunities. (WHBSW 2021)

5.6.2 What the data is telling us

The People Matters survey sets out that there is a gap in staff perceptions compared to other local governments in the following areas:

- In relation to recruitment and promotion:
 - » My Organisation makes fair recruitment and promotion decision based on merit (COS 41%, LGA 54%)
 - » Age is not a barrier to success in my organisation (COS 58%, LGA 66%)
 - » Gender is not a barrier to success in my organisation (COS 63%, LGA 74%)
 - » Sexual Orientation is not a barrier to success in my organisation (COS 59%, LGA 74%)
 - » Disability is not a barrier to success in my organisation (COS 49%, LGA 60%)

The baseline survey shows 35 women and 26 men were recruited to the organisation in the past 12 months, and 67 women and 51 men undertook career development opportunities.

Interestingly, 29 women and almost half that number of men (13) left the organisation. It is unclear what the reasons for leaving were. Improved structured exit processes need to be reviewed.

There are no statistics available for self-described genders.

5.7 Leave and Flexibility:

5.7.1 Rationale

All Leave:

Flexible working arrangements and leave entitlements including parental leave help Victorians of all genders balance paid work with other responsibilities. But 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.

On average women do nearly twice as much unpaid work as men. It is important that defined entities collect clear data on who is accessing flexible work so they can see 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).

5.7.2 What the data is telling us

The People Matters survey shows that the organisation is performing well compared to its peers when it comes to leave and flexibility. This was also reflected in feedback from the interviews with SLT members.

The baseline survey sets out that 19 women have taken up flexible working arrangements and only 4 men.

This may point to dis-proportionate caring responsibilities falling to women in the workforce.

Encouragingly, it was noted that one senior leader in the organisation is utilising flexible working arrangements. This role modelling is important in setting the standard for flexible working arrangements.

In relation to family violence leave it is noted that the Flexible Leave Policy (2019) and EBA # 8 provides for additional discretionary paid special leave up to a maximum of 10 days per annum.

5.8 Gendered segregation in the workplace:

5.8.1 Rationale

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)

5.8.2 What the data is telling us

The People Matters survey sets out that there is further work to do in the organisation on the inclusion and use of respectful images and making staff feel culturally safe at work. Encouragingly, staff report that work is allocated fairly regardless of gender.

The use of ANZSCO codes for categorising the workforce shows that the workforce displays similar “traditional role” characteristics to other councils where women are over represented in clerical, administrative and health roles and men dominate the technical, trades and machinery operator roles.

A finer grained analysis of the Colac Otway workforce follows:

- Cat 1 - Managers
 - » 7 W / 13 M (note includes facility managers also)
 - » EMT 0 W / 4 M (at 30 June – now CEO, W).
- Cat 2 – Professionals
 - » 46 W / 28 Men
 - » Design and Engineering professional 10 W / 19 M
- Health Professionals 17 W / 2 M
- Midwife and Nursing 15 W / 0 M
- Social welfare prof 8 W / 2 M
- Cat 3 – Technicians and Trades Workers
 - » 0 W / 11 M
- Cat 4 – Community and Personal Service Workers
 - » 90 W / 26 M
 - » Child Care 11 W / 0 M
 - » Personal Care assistants 39 W / 3 M
 - » Sports and fitness 28 W / 19 M
- Cat 5 – Clerical and Administrative Workers
 - » 80 W / 23 M
 - » General clerical workers 45 W / 2 M
- Cat 7 – Machinery Operators and Drivers
 - » 3 W / 56 M
- Cat 8 – Cleaners and Labourers
 - » 18 W / 8 M

At this point the Organisation does not have any data relating to the “traditional” unpaid work in the workplace such as cleaning the tea room, clearing out common fridge, stocking the social club supplies, emptying the dishwasher, or catering for staff morning teas is divided. This issue can also be addressed as part of the action plan for Gender Equality.

5.9 Bullying

5.9.1 Rationale

The GEAP does not usually address bullying as a specific component.

Information collated during the survey phase has led to the matter being addressed as part of the GEAP.

5.9.2 What the data is telling us

The PM Survey states that 23% of respondents has experienced bullying. This result is slightly lower than the industry average response but the types and frequency of the bullying also points to an underlying issue that will need to be addressed.

- Types of bullying experienced include
 - Incivility 53%
 - Exclusion or Isolation 47%
 - » Withholding information to do my job 37%
 - Frequency of bullying
 - » Once a week 32%
 - » Less than once a month 26%

5.9.3 Desktop Research

The Australian Human Rights Commission and Worksafe are good resources for understanding workplace bullying and developing a framework.

The strategies and actions on possible improvements to bullying across the workforce are contained in the Action Plan Matrix at Appendix 10.1 and also referenced in the Workforce Plan.

6. Consultation and Engagement:

6.1 The Workplace Equality and Respect Journey

The Organisation has been active in regard to equality and respect through policy and training and acknowledges that more needs to be done.

Key actions include:

- 2015:
 - » Development of an Access and Inclusion Plan 2015-2025.
- 2018:
 - » Development of and endorsement of a Gender Equity Strategy.
- 2019:
 - » Trained staff in recognising and responding to disclosures of Family Violence.
 - » Adopted the “Our Watch Program” across the Organisation.
 - » Formed the Workplace Equality and Respect Group (WERG). Terms of reference were developed and training provided.
- 2021:
 - » A Sexual Harassment policy and action plan were endorsed by management in February.

6.2 The process of developing this GEAP:

This GEAP has been developed following the appointment of a consultant to assist the Executive Management Team to satisfy the requirements of the Gender Equality Act and improve gender equality, inclusiveness and diversity across the Organisation.

The role of the Workplace Equality and Respect Group (WERG) and the SLT has been critical in increasing awareness across the Organisation and providing a project control group for the development of this GEAP.

Councillors, union representatives and the SLT have been briefed and consulted on the requirements of this GEAP.

The Intranet site has been a key to disseminating information, toolkits and training materials.

The GEAP and associated Action Plan Matrix will continue to be a live document through the ongoing role of the WERG that will meet over the life of this plan to ensure accountability for the listed strategies and actions.

7. The Case for Change:

7.1 The 10 Gender Equality Principles

The Gender Equality Act 2020 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. The act also sets out that special measures may be necessary to achieve

7.2 Why GE is relevant and important (business case)

As mentioned in the introduction section of this report, the



benefits of implementing GE measures to the Organisation will result in improvements to overall performance and perceptions by the community through:

- Improved productivity, economic and social outcomes
- Improved engagement and wellbeing of staff
- Enhanced ability of the Organisation to attract talent and retain employees
- Enhance the Organisation's capacity to innovate in order to solve complex problems during changing conditions
- Enhanced ability of the Organisation to engage with Victoria's diverse community.

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

- Sexual harassment, and
- Family violence

Further, literature outlined in this Plan references the historical discrimination and disadvantage that women have experienced that is further compounded by those that have intersectional disadvantage relating to:

- Age
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Indigeneity
- Sexual orientation
- Religion
- Culture
- Race

The Workforce will be greatly enhanced when the above factors and impacts are recognised and addressed through the implementation of this GEAP

7.3 How the GE Principles and Intersectionality has been considered

The ten principles and intersectionality data has been incorporated into the analysis and development of the Action Plan Matrix, consideration of best practice publications and consultation and interaction with the WERG.

As previously acknowledged, the collection of intersectional data was difficult and the Action Plan will drive new systems and processes and reporting to overcome this during the life of this GEAP.

There is however an emerging awareness of gender equality and the impacts on people who also have a disadvantaged or diverse background across the Organisation through the training sessions and best practice materials being provided through face-to-face session and the intranet site.

7.4 A vision for Gender Equality in 2026

Consultation and conversations have resulted in the following Vision being created:

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

8. Regional Approaches and Collaboration:

Smaller rural and regional councils across the state have struggled to resource and complete the data collection, analysis and the compliance requirements of the Gender Equality Act.

This is in an environment that also saw significant requirements for the new Local Government Act 2021, the election and induction of new councillors and the disruption and rework caused by the COVID pandemic.

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.

There is a genuine appreciation by Council representatives and a desire to cooperative and leverage systems, training and development to reduce the impact on scarce resources of each Council.

It is suggested that Management continues to avail itself of this leadership and expert resource and continue to meet and expand its involvement in regional opportunities.

The strategies and actions on possible regional approaches and collaboration are contained in the Action Plan Matrix at Appendix 10.1.

9. Strategies and Measures:

Section 5 of this Plan set out the key findings and provided analysis of the results of the various strategies and OD data base queries in relation to Gender Equality, inclusiveness and diversity.

Key strategies and actions were identified that will assist the Colac Otway Organisation to implement the GEAP



over the next four years.

Appendix 10.1 sets out the strategies and actions in an Action Plan format identified to address the most significant gaps in current versus desired state.

It is recognised that not all aspects of desired state can be achieved in the short term.

The strategies and actions in the Action Plan Matrix have been grouped under key themes to aid interpretation as follows:

- Access and Inclusion:
 - » Gender Composition and Segregation
 - » Gender Pay Equity
 - » Leave and Flexibility
 - » Recruitment and Promotion
 - » Diversity
- Safe Workplace:
 - » Sexual Harassment
 - » Bullying

- Leadership and Capacity Building:
 - » Leadership
 - » Organisational Culture
 - » Training and Capacity Building
 - » Targeted Communications
 - » Data, Evidence and Strategy
- Collaboration:
 - » Regional Approaches
 - » Advocacy
 - » Partnerships

10. Appendices:

The following appendices have been added as required by the GE Act 2020 or provide background data to support the earlier sections of this Plan:

10.1 Action Plan Matrix (GEAP)

10.2 Workforce Reporting Template V3.2



Focus Area/Theme	Gender Equality/ Other Indicators	Strategy	Action	Timing Year	Measures	Resources	Manager Accountable
Access and Inclusion	Gender Composition and Segregation	Strive for greater diversity in leadership roles	As opportunities arise, continue to address the gender and diversity imbalance at the EMT and SLT levels in the Organisation. (See link to <i>Recruitment and Promotion</i> below) W = Woman M = Man S = Self Described Gender	2022-2026 2050	Strive for 50/50 (W/M) balance by year 4 Stive for 40/40/20 (W/M/S) by 2050	Within resources of 10 Year Financial Plan	EMT/Mng P&C
		Strive for greater equality in 'traditional roles'	As opportunities arise, address the gender and diversity imbalance at the following ANZSCO levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionals • Tech and Trades • Community and Personal Services • Clerical and Administrative • Machinery Operators and Drivers • Cleaners and Labourers 	2022-2026	Positive trend from ANZSCO reporting on an annual basis	Within resources of 10 Year Financial Plan	EMT/Mng P&C
	Equal Remuneration for Work of Equal Value (Gender Pay Equity)	Ensure pay equity is analysed and addressed	Better understand and address the Total Remuneration Gap between Men and Women Better understand and act on unequal pay (like for like across the Organisation) gender pay gaps Better understand and act on division of unpaid/domestic duties in the workplace	2022-2026 2022-2026 2022/23	Reducing trend in the Gap annually Reducing trend in teh Gap annually Feedback from pulse survey question Positive trend over period 2022-2026	Within resources of 10 Year Financial Plan Within resources of 10 Year Financial Plan No further resources required	EMT EMT WERG
	Leave and Flexibility	Implement flexible workplace practices	Review the Flexible Leave Policy (2019) and EBA with formalising a separate Family Violence Leave policy and process Review the Flexible Leave Policy and EBA in line with best practice to support improved parental leave and parental backfill capacity	2022-23 2022-23	Review undertaken Review undertaken	Within resources of 10 Year Financial Plan Within resources of 10 Year Financial Plan	EMT/Mng P&C EMT/Mng P&C

Focus Area/Theme	Gender Equality/ Other Indicators	Strategy	Action	Timing Year	Measures	Resources	Manager Accountable
Access and Inclusion	Leave and Flexibility	Implement flexible workplace practices	Review the Flexible Leave Policy and EBC for flexibility for all roles with a requirement to justify 'if not, why not' Encourage Senior Management to role model genuine workplace flexibility including the option of part-time and alternative working modes Include discussions about care and outside or work responsibilities in regular coaching, performance and planning discussions for all employees Ensure all meetings have both in person and virtual attendance options	2022/23 2022-2026 2022-2026 2022-2026	Review undertaken Positive trend annually Performance Review process modified Process and ICT reviewed and implemented	Within resources of 10 Year Financial Plan No further resources required No further resources required No further resources required	EMT/Mng P&C SLT Mng P&C SLT
	Recruitment and Promotion	Ensure recruitment practices are equal and fair	Pilot 'blind recruitment' for EMT and SLT leadership roles and analyse the variance in outcomes relative to standard recruitment processes (See <i>Workforce Plan also</i>)	2023/24	Process revised and implemented	No further resources required	Mng P&C
		Recruitment, Retention and Promotion	Develop best practice strategy or policy for workforce: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attraction • Recruitment • Onboarding data collection • Retention • Reward and Recognition • Exist from Organisation (See <i>Workforce Plan also</i>)	2023/24	Policy and process reviewed and implemented	Within resources of 10 Year Financial Plan	EMT/Mng 0&C
	Diversity	Foster a culture where diversity is valued	Establish a traineeship or scholarship to support more diverse entry into non-traditional local government career pathways Host and participate in initiatives and events that champion progress towards gender equality, including days of significance such as International Women's Day, IDAHOBIT day, 16 Days of Activism, #EqualPayDay, Reconciliation/NAIDOC Week	2025/26 2022-2026	Policy and process reviewed and implemented Number of events hosted Positive trend in number of participants	Within resources of 10 Year Financial Plan Specific budget and shared responsibility from staff within resources of 10 Year Financial Plan	EMT/Mng P&C EMT/Mng P&C

Focus Area/Theme	Gender Equality/ Other Indicators	Strategy	Action	Timing Year	Measures	Resources	Manager Accountable
Access and Inclusion	Diversity	Foster a culture where diversity is valued	Promote a safe and respectful community for women and gender diverse people free from discrimination and harassment by undertaking a program such as Respect@Work	2023/24	Numbers of programs developed Positive trend in number of participants	No further resources required	EMT/Mng P&C
Safe Workplace	Workplace Bullying and Sexual Harassment	Prioritise the analysis and improvement of sexual harassment and bullying policies and processes	Continue to roll out the Sexual Harassment Action Plan (March 2021)		6 monthly reporting to EMT on the progress of the Action Plan	No further resources required	EMT/SLT/ Mng P&C
			Demonstrate that inappropriate behaviours will be dealt with swiftly and decisively by reducing the timeframe for resolution of sexual harassment, bullying and discipline matters		Reducing trend in timeframes for responding to and resolving reports (de-identified)	No further resources required	EMT/SLT/ Mng P&C
			Appoint Equal Opportunity/Lead Contact Officers that are 'safe' to disclose/confide in and seek advice (in addition to formal process)	2022/23	Policy and process and reporting developed	Within resources of 10 Year Financial Plan	EMT/Mng P&C
			Undertake Respectful Behavioural training on a bi-annual basis	2024, 2026	No. of staff undertaking training	Within resources of the Training Budget	Mng P&C
			Revise bullying policies and processes in line with best practice. Consider a stand-alone Prevention of Bullying in the Workplace Policy	2022/23	Reducing trend - instances of bullying PM or similar survey	No further resources required	EMT/SLT/ Mng P&C
Leadership and Capacity Building	Leadership	Organisational Commitment to Gender Equality	EMT and SLT are actively engaged in the organisation's gender equality strategy, programs, events and initiatives	2022-2026	Positive trend in the number attending	No further resources required	EMT/SLT
			EMT and SLT are committed to ongoing professional development and training in relation to gender equality	2022-2026	Positive trend in the number attending	No further resources required	EMT/SLT

Focus Area/Theme	Gender Equality/ Other Indicators	Strategy	Action	Timing Year	Measures	Resources	Manager Accountable
Leadership and Capacity Building	Leadership	Council Plan 2021-2025	<p>Deliver the Council Plan and MHWB outcomes in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The provision of gender neutral sports facilities (note: long term action) Facilities accommodate gender neutral design principles Facility fees and charges structure embrace GE, diversity and access Community events that celebrate diversity Reflect RAP delivered by 2022 Support services to reduce all forms of violence Embed GEAP recommendation in practice and policy framework 	2021-2025	Quarterly reporting to Council reflects progress	Within resources of 10 Year Financial Plan	MPHP - Lead Organisations and EMT
	Organisational Culture	Improve culture and staff satisfaction	<p>Finalise the roll out and live the Organisational Values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting clear lines fo acceptable behaviour Having confidence to call out inappropriate behaviour Being aware that making people uncomfortable because of their gender or diversity is not ok Recognise that there will be discipline consequences for poor behaviour <p>(See <i>Workforce Plan also</i>)</p> <p>Continue to undertake Gender Impact Assessments on key projects and policies</p>	2021-2026	<p>Positive trend in the Insync (or similar) Survey</p> <p>Positive trend in the People Matters Survey (or similar)</p>	No resources required	EMT/SLT
	Training and Capacity Building		<p>Train and develop the workforce to understand what gender equality and gender equity look like in practice</p> <p>Support women in their career progression through targeted training and development. E.g., Women's Leadership Group and Listen, Learn and Lead</p>	2022-2026	<p>Number of GIA's reported to the GE Commissioner under the Act</p> <p>Positive trend (%) of workforce that have received GE training</p> <p>No. of opportunities, participation rates, promotion/availability</p>	No resources required	EMT/SLT
				2022-2026		Within resources of the Training Budget	Mng P&C
				2022-2026		Within resources of the Training Budget	EMT/Mng P&C

Focus Area/Theme	Gender Equality/ Other Indicators	Strategy	Action	Timing Year	Measures	Resources	Manager Accountable
Leadership and Capacity Building	Training and Capacity Building		Continue to support and resources the WERG to enable champions across the organisation and provide advice to management on gaps and best practice in the equality, diversity, discrimination and inclusiveness Engage a specialist organisation to conduct sexual harassment training on an annual basis	2022-2026	Positive trend from survey of WERG members annually	Within resources of the Training Budget	EMT/Mng P&C
				2022-2026	Annual training % of all staff that have participated	Within resources of the Training Budget	Mgn P&C
	Targeted Communications						
		Develop internal and external communication strategies to promote gender equality	Develop a PR and Comms strategy that regularly communicates GE principles and key learnings in the organisation on a regular basis including an initial focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GE • LGBTIQIA+ • People with a disability 	2022-2026	Number of articles/ releases	No resources required	Mng C&C
			Provide comprehensive professional development and training for communications team and other officers regularly preparing communications, focusing on gender equality messaging and respectful communication with indigenous people	2022/2023	Training provided	Within resources of the Training Budget	Mng G&C
	Data, Evidence and Strategy						
		Leadership and practice are informed by data and evidence	Develop regular dashboard reporting on GE indicators, salary trends and employee demographics and diversity to senior leadership to inform gender equity goals, programs and initiatives Finalise the ICT / Digital Review with a view to enhancing the shift to flexible ways of working.	2022/23	Dashboard developed or shared arrangement in place	Within resources of 10 Year Financial Plan.	EMT/Mng P&C
				2022/23	Strategy reflects enhanced flexible working	Within resources of 10 Year Financial Plan.	Mng IS
			Gather data to better understand the impact of compounded disadvantage on GE	2022/23	Dashboard developed or shared arrangement in place	Within resources of 10 Year Financial Plan.	EMT/Mng P&C

Focus Area/Theme	Gender Equality/ Other Indicators	Strategy	Action	Timing Year	Measures	Resources	Manager Accountable
Collaboration	Regional Approaches and Partnerships	Regional approach to GE data collection and evidence analysis	Actively participate in ongoing regional opportunities to collectively advocate for improvements in GE outcomes Partner with Women's Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West and G21 to develop the G21 Respect 2040 Plan which provides a shared vision to address gender equity and prevention of violence against women Partner with Women's Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West and G21 to develop the G21 Respect 2040 Plan which provides a shared vision to address gender equity and prevention of violence against women	2022-2026 2022	Number of opportunities participated in Partnership formed	No further resources required No further resources required	EMT/SLT SLT/Mng P&C
			Participate in MAV and VLGA leadership initiatives such as the "Stand for Council" and "Local Women Leading Change" programs	2022-2026	Active Participation		
		Participate in relevant MAV/VLGA initiatives		2024	Council resolves to participate in programs (or similar)	No further resources required	Council