



Hepburn Shire Council | Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-2025

March 2022

Foreword from CEO

I am pleased to present Council's first Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP). This is an important piece of work and one that outlines practical ways that we can continue to embed gender equity into our day-to-day work.

Addressing gender equity makes sense for our organisation in so many ways. Research shows that businesses who prioritise gender equity are more able to source and retain staff, are more innovative, make better business decisions, represent the make-up of community, and are better off financially.

As you'll see in our gender action plan, everyone can have a positive impact on gender equality and everyone can benefit from gender equality in the workplace and in our community.

It's important that all of our employees – regardless of gender – are valued, safe, included, respected and represented. We want to lead by example in our community to positively promote gender equality.

Our vision for gender equity builds on our Community Vision and Council Plan. Our Gender Equality objective for our Shire is that *Hepburn Shire Council has embedded a strong culture of gender equity and diversity. We provide the resources and support to ensure all employees feel safe, included and represented. We are positioned as a leader in gender equality within our community.*

Our three main priorities in the GEAP are:

Embed an inclusive culture that respects diversity and ensure a safe workplace for all.

Improve transparency to ensure fair recruitment, development, and promotion practices.

Enhance visibility and monitoring of the status of gender equality and diversity in the organisation.

This work is a priority for Council, and it ties in with our leadership commitment to prevention of gender-based violence, along with many other plans, including the objectives in our Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan.

By thinking about and addressing gender inequality our workplace will be safer and healthier for everyone.

Thank you to all staff who provided input into this plan. I look forward to seeing the positive outcomes as it is implemented.



Bradley Thomas
Chief Executive Officer

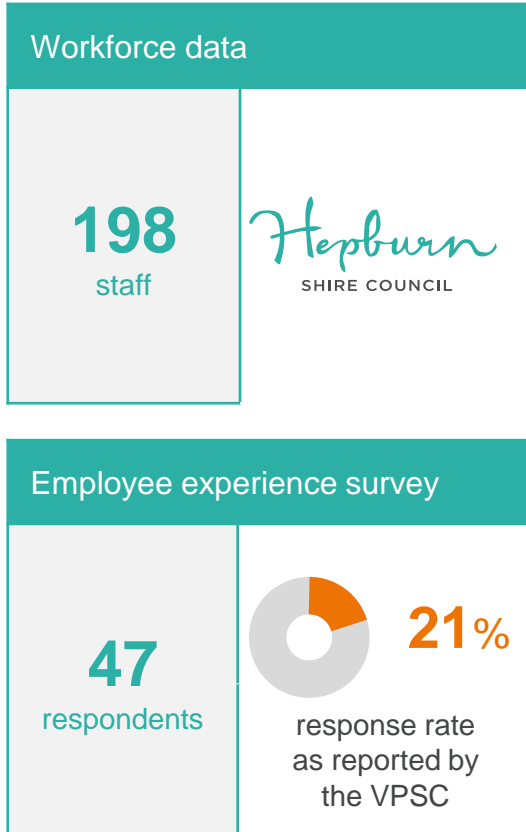
1. Process and participation

The consultation process and participation (1/2)



The workplace gender audit report was used as stimulus for the consultation process

The audit report was developed using analysis of internal workforce data and responses to the employee experience survey (People Matter).



The consultation process was delivered through a series of small, facilitated focus groups.

Participants were asked for their reflections on the audit report, as well as their general experiences, observations and hypotheses about the state of gender equality in their workplace.

The focus groups included 3 employee focus groups and 1 focus group with Councillors.

| Focus groups | |
|--------------|--------------|
| 4 | Focus groups |
| 14 | Employees |
| 7 | Councillors |

Representatives included:

- Men, women, prefer to self-describe
- Part-time/full-time
- Culturally and linguistically diverse
- Early career staff
- Management

The consultation process and participation (2/2)



The GEAP was developed over two half-day workshops on February 28, 2022 and March 11, 2022 facilitated by Right Lane Consulting.

| GEAP Development | | Participants |
|------------------|--|---|
| 1 | Workshop 1: Draft Hepburn Shire Council's Case for Change and GEAP Priorities | Gender Equality Project Control Group |
| 2 | Workshop 2: Review and endorse the draft case for change and priorities, and draft Hepburn Shire Council's GEAP on a page (strategies and measures) | Hepburn Shire Council Leadership Team (Executive, Managers and Coordinators) |

Consultation 2

In preparing the GEAP, the outcomes of the Leadership Team Working Group that determined the strategies and measures were shared with all employees on the Staff Intranet. Employees were invited to review the outcomes and contact the People & Culture team with any feedback, questions or comments ahead of the GEAP being submitted. Managers and Coordinators were also asked to share the post and outcomes amongst their teams for discussion.

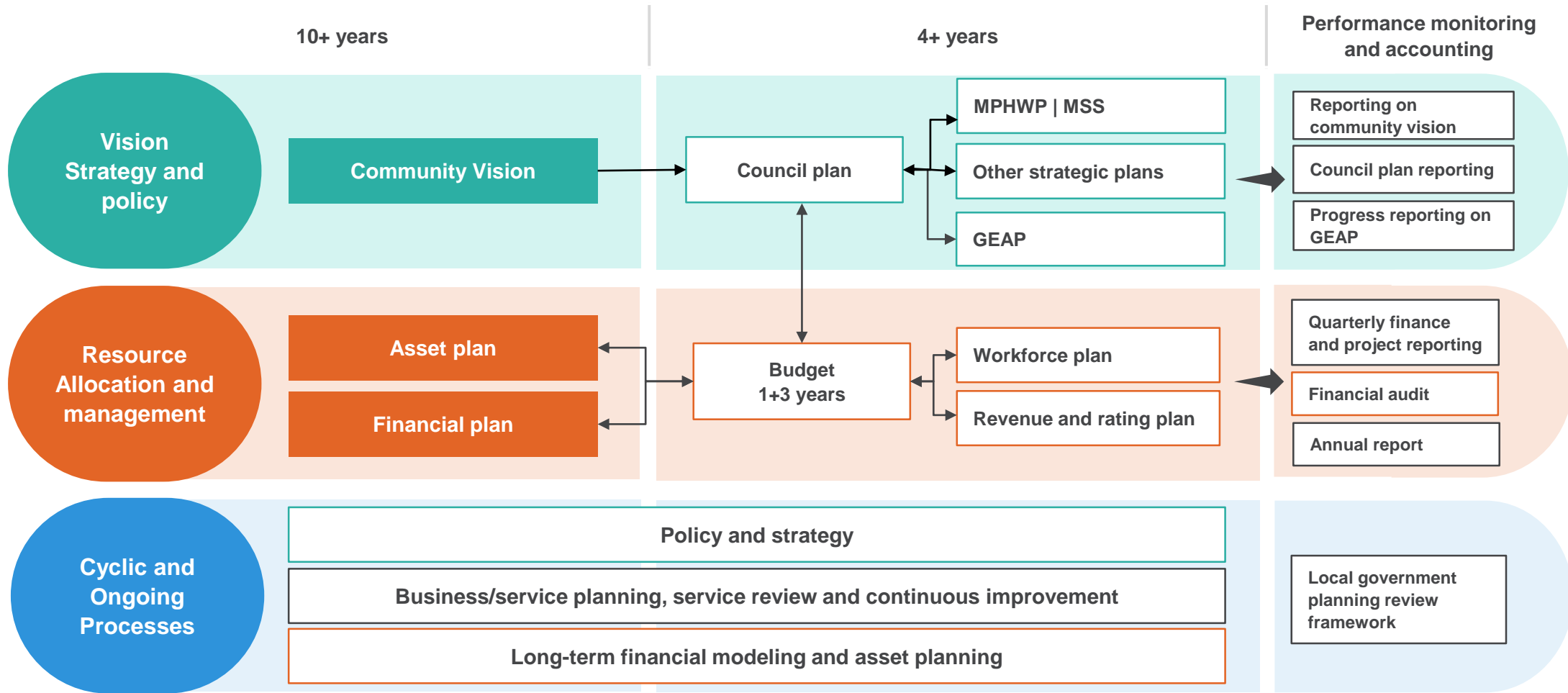
Leadership Approval

The final GEAP was reviewed and endorsed by the Hepburn Shire Council Executive Team 30 March 2022 at the regular Executive Team Meeting.

2. Case for change

Gender equality at Hepburn Shire Council

The Gender Equality Action Plan is a core strategy for Hepburn Shire Council, that supports the delivery of the Community Vision and Council Plan. As for other plans and strategies, the GEAP will be subject to regular performance monitoring.







The case for change at Hepburn Shire Council (1 of 2)

Hepburn Shire Council acknowledges the gender equality principles outlined in the Act, and is committed to developing a Gender Equality Action Plan in line with those principles.

As a leader within the community, we have a social responsibility to lead by example in our promotion of gender equality and to demonstrate the benefits it delivers for everyone. We are responsible for making Hepburn Shire a better place to work and live, for our employees, their families and the broader community.

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR GENDER EQUALITY:

| What are the benefits of gender equality for our workplace? | |
|---|---|
|  | Attracting and retaining quality talent: getting the best person for the job regardless of gender and intersectional characteristics. |
|  | Representing our community: building greater diversity across our workforce which will enhance our decision-making, enable innovation and drive performance of council. We will reflect the principles of deliberative engagement within our own workforce to better represent our community. |
|  | Wellbeing and safety: promoting a healthy and safe working environment that prevents harmful gender stereotypes and encourages healthy masculinities. This will support positive outcomes for employee mental health, and foster an engaged and committed workforce. |
|  | Holistic understanding of gender: promoting awareness of gender equality and how it is interrelated with other issues that the community experiences, such as the gendered impacts of COVID, floods, and bushfires. Education and greater awareness will better equip our teams to achieve positive outcomes for the community through their work. |

Source: Hepburn Shire Council. (2022, 28 February). Gender equality working group workshop, facilitated by Right Lane Consulting.; Hepburn Shire Council (2021). Community Vision 2021-2031.

The case for change at Hepburn Shire Council (2 of 2)

OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE:

What will gender equality look, feel and be like in our workplace in 2025?

Hepburn Shire Council community vision statement: 'Hepburn Shire – an inclusive rural community located in Dja Dja Wurrung country where all people are valued, partnerships are fostered, environment is protected, diversity supported, and innovation embraced.'

To support this community vision, our objective for gender equality within Hepburn Shire Council is:

Hepburn Shire Council embeds a strong culture of gender equality and diversity. We provide the resources and support to ensure all employees feel safe, included and represented. We are positioned as a leader in gender equality within our community.

Hepburn Shire Council acknowledges the gender equality principles outlined in the Act



| | | | |
|---|--|----|--|
| 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. | 6 | Advancing gender equality is a shared responsibility across the Victorian community. |
| 2 | Gender equality benefits all Victorians regardless of gender. | 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. |
| 3 | Gender equality is a human right and precondition to social justice. | 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. |
| 4 | Gender equality brings significant economic, social and health benefits for Victoria. | 9 | Women have historically experienced discrimination and disadvantage on the basis of sex and gender. |
| 5 | Gender equality is a precondition for the prevention of family violence and other forms of violence against women and girls. | 10 | Special measures may be necessary to achieve gender equality. |

3. Strategies and measures

Hepburn Shire Council GEAP strategies and measures

| | Embed an inclusive culture that respects diversity and ensures a safe workplace for all | Improve transparency and understanding to ensure fair recruitment, development and promotion practices | Enhance visibility and monitoring of the status of gender equality and diversity in the organisation |
|------------|---|--|--|
| Strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and embed simple, accessible, anonymous reporting processes for inappropriate behaviour in the workplace (including sexual harassment and bullying) that ensure adequate response and support mechanisms Commit to reporting of sexual harassment complaints to the Audit and Risk Committee as a standing workplace health and safety agenda item Incorporate gender inclusive language into all standards and protocols, forms, surveys and induction processes Include gender equality and cultural awareness in our training program (induction training and regular updates in our new corporate training calendar, including active bystander training) Review current Council operational spaces to ensure they are welcoming and inclusive for all genders and intersectionalities Introduce an advertising and awareness campaign to remind community members to treat staff with respect in our interactions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine our recruitment process with a gender and diversity lens (including targeted recruitment for binary dominated roles; improving diversity representation in advertising, imaging and wording; reviewing application requirements; and expanding our recruitment channels) Review and refresh the recruitment panel process to increase transparency and expand the diversity of our panels Reboot the performance development/annual review process to reset expectations and enable equitable implementation (including training for leaders/managers) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen data collection systems and processes to fill data gaps (including establishing the system for employees to control their own data; space on forms for employees to identify themselves; and promoting feedback opportunities such as people matter and pulse surveys) Enhance visibility and commitment to gender equality through our communications (including promoting existing gender equality across Councillors, executive and leadership team, and other traditionally gender segregated roles) Identify opportunities for mentoring/ buddies across different sites and locations to encourage cross team relationships and remove gender barriers and bias |
| Measures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of PMS respondents who agree they feel safe to challenge inappropriate behaviour at work % of PMS respondents that experienced sexual harassment/ bullying / violence and aggression / discrimination that reported it to a manager or HR % of workforce that has completed training or education/awareness initiatives % of PMS respondents who agree there is a positive culture of diversity and inclusion at Hepburn Shire Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % gender balance and intersectional representation in [recruitment shortlists and roles recruited] % of all staff that have sat on a recruitment panel % gender balance for promotions % PMS respondents who agree Hepburn Shire Council makes fair recruitment and promotion decisions % of PMS respondents who agree that gender (and intersectional characteristics) are not barriers to success at Hepburn Shire Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of unfilled data gaps for workplace gender audit indicators % completion rate of the PMS % of workforce representation (overall and by level and function) across all genders and intersectional factors (e.g. CALD, A&TSI, disability etc.) % of PMS respondents who agree that senior leaders actively support diversity and inclusion in the workplace |

Priority 1 – Embed an inclusive culture that respects diversity and ensures a safe workplace for all

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| Strategy | Measures | Accountability | Implementation timeline |
|--|--|--|----------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and embed simple, accessible, anonymous reporting processes for inappropriate behaviour in the workplace (including sexual harassment and bullying) that ensure adequate response and support mechanisms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of People Matter Survey respondents who agree they feel safe to challenge inappropriate behaviour at work % of PMS respondents that experienced sexual harassment/ bullying / violence and aggression / discrimination that reported it to a manager or HR % of workforce that has completed training or education/awareness initiatives % of PMS respondents who agree there is a positive culture of diversity and inclusion at Hepburn Shire Council % of staff who have completed training (e.g. sexual harassment, bullying etc.) | Manager Culture & Performance | June 2023 – June 2024 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commit to reporting of sexual harassment complaints to the Audit and Risk Committee as a standing workplace health and safety agenda item | | Manager Culture & Performance/ Manager Governance & Risk/ Safety Systems Facilitator | June 2024 – June 2025 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate gender inclusive language into all standards and protocols, forms, surveys and induction processes | | Manager Culture & Performance | April 2022 – December 2022 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include gender equality and cultural awareness in our training program (induction training and regular updates in our new corporate training calendar, including active bystander training) | | Manager Culture & Performance | June 2022 – June 2023 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current Council operational spaces to ensure they are welcoming and inclusive for all genders and intersectionality's | | Manager Waste, Facilities & Community Safety / Coordinator Facilities | June 2022 – June 2023 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce an advertising and awareness campaign to remind community members to treat staff with respect in our interactions | | Coordinator Customer Experience / Engagement Specialist | June 2022 – June 2023 |

Priority 2 – Improve transparency and understanding to ensure fair recruitment, development and promotion practices

Priority 2: Improve transparency and understanding to ensure fair recruitment, development and promotion practices

| Strategy | Measures | Accountability | Implementation timeline |
|--|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine our recruitment process with a gender and diversity lens (including targeted recruitment for binary dominated roles; improving diversity representation in advertising, imaging and wording; reviewing application requirements; and expanding our recruitment channels) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % gender balance and intersectional representation in [recruitment shortlists and roles recruited] % of all staff that have sat on a recruitment panel % gender balance for promotions % People Matter Survey respondents who agree Hepburn Shire Council makes fair recruitment and promotion decisions % of PMS respondents who agree that gender (and intersectional characteristics) are not barriers to success at Hepburn Shire Council | Manager Culture & Performance | June 2023 – June 2024 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and refresh the recruitment panel process to increase transparency and expand the diversity of our panels | | Manager Culture & Performance | June 2023 – June 2024 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reboot the performance development/annual review process to reset expectations and enable equitable implementation (including training for leaders/managers) | | Manager Culture & Performance | June 2024 – June 2025 |

Priority 3 – Enhance visibility and monitoring of the status of gender equality and diversity in the organisation

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| Strategy | Measures | Accountability | Implementation timeline |
|---|--|---|-------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen data collection systems and processes to fill data gaps (including establishing the system for employees to control their own data; space on forms for employees to identify themselves; and promoting feedback opportunities such as people matter and pulse surveys) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of unfilled data gaps for workplace gender audit indicators % completion rate of the PMS % of workforce representation (overall and by level and function) across all genders and intersectional factors (e.g. CALD, A&TSI, disability etc.) % of PMS respondents who agree that senior leaders actively support diversity and inclusion in the workplace | Manager ICT / Manager Culture & Performance | April 2022 – December 2022 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance visibility and commitment to gender equality through our communications (including promoting existing gender equality across Councillors, executive and leadership team, and other traditionally gender segregated roles) | | Communications | December 2023 – December 2024 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities for mentoring/ buddies across different sites and locations to encourage cross team relationships and remove gender barriers and bias | | Manager Culture & Performance | June 2024 – June 2025 |

Hepburn Shire Council acknowledges the pay equity principles outlined in the Act



| | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | Establishing equal pay for work of equal or comparable value | Equal or comparable value refers to work valued as equal in terms of skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions. This includes work of different types |
| 2 | Free from bias or discrimination | Employment and pay practices are free from the effects of unconscious bias and assumptions based on gender |
| 3 | Transparency and accessibility | Employment and pay practices, pay rates and systems are transparent. Information is readily accessible and understandable |
| 4 | Relationship between paid and unpaid work | Employment and pay practices recognise and account for different patterns of labour force participation by workers who undertake unpaid and/or caring work |
| 5 | Sustainability | Interventions and solutions are collectively developed and agreed, sustainable and enduring |
| 6 | Participation and engagement | Workers, unions and employers work collaboratively to achieve mutually agreed outcomes |

Hepburn Shire Council acknowledges the gender pay equity principles and recognises that our gender pay gap data shows that whilst there is not evidence of a gender pay gap for work of comparable value, the overall pay gap reflects the structural gendered segregation of our workforce.

Our GEAP includes a priority to *embed an inclusive culture that respects diversity and ensures a safe workplace for all*, one that is free from bias and discrimination, supported by the required training and process implementation.

We have also committed to *enhance visibility and monitoring of the status of gender equality and diversity in the organisation*. In addition to our obligations to publish audit data pertinent to our GEAP, we commit to being transparent about recruitment, career development opportunities and promoting them to all of our staff.

We have made a long-term commitment to achieving gender equality at Hepburn Shire Council and have developed strategies that will be both sustainable and enduring.

We will continue to work collaboratively with staff to foster a safe and inclusive community where everyone has an equal opportunity to embrace and reach their full potential.

4. Resourcing your GEAP








High-level implementation plan

| Priority | Strategy | Accountable | Start date (month – year) | End date (month – year) |
|----------|---|--|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Establish and embed simple, accessible, anonymous reporting processes for inappropriate behaviour in the workplace (including sexual harassment and bullying) that ensure adequate response and support mechanisms | Manager Culture & Performance | June 2023 | June 2024 |
| 1 | Commit to reporting of sexual harassment complaints to the Audit and Risk Committee as a standing workplace health and safety agenda item | Manager Culture & Performance/ Manager Governance & Risk/ Safety Systems Facilitator | June 2024 | June 2025 |
| 1 | Incorporate gender inclusive language into all standards and protocols, forms, surveys and induction processes | Manager Culture & Performance | April 2022 | December 2022 |
| 1 | Include gender equality and cultural awareness in our training program (induction training and regular updates in our new corporate training calendar, including active bystander training) | Manager Culture & Performance | June 2022 | June 2023 |
| 1 | Review current Council operational spaces to ensure they are welcoming and inclusive for all genders and intersectionalities | Manager Waste, Facilities & Community Safety / Coordinator Facilities | June 2022 | June 2023 |
| 1 | Introduce an advertising and awareness campaign to remind community members to treat staff with respect in our interactions | Coordinator Customer Experience | June 2022 | June 2023 |
| 2 | Examine our recruitment process with a gender and diversity lens (including targeted recruitment for binary dominated roles; improving diversity representation in advertising, imaging and wording; reviewing application requirements; and expanding our recruitment channels) | Manager Culture & Performance | June 2023 | June 2024 |
| 2 | Review and refresh the recruitment panel process to increase transparency and expand the diversity of our panels | Manager Culture & Performance | June 2023 | June 2024 |
| 2 | Reboot the performance development/annual review process to reset expectations and enable equitable implementation (including training for leaders/managers) | Manager Culture & Performance | June 2024 | June 2025 |
| 3 | Strengthen data collection systems and processes to fill data gaps (including establishing the system for employees to control their own data; space on forms for employees to identify themselves; and promoting feedback opportunities such as people matter and pulse surveys) | Manager ICT / Manager Culture & Performance | April 2022 | December 2022 |
| 3 | Enhance visibility and commitment to gender equality through our communications (including promoting existing gender equality across Councillors, executive and leadership team, and other traditionally gender segregated roles) | Communications | December 2023 | December 2024 |
| 3 | Identify opportunities for mentoring/ buddies across different sites and locations to encourage cross team relationships and remove gender barriers and bias | Manager Culture & Performance | June 2024 | June 2025 |

5. Measuring progress

Approach to measuring and communicating progress on the GEAP

Our approach to measuring and communicating progress on our GEAP will include the following activities:

| MEASURES | | COMMUNICATION | |
|---|--|---|---|
|  | Annual People Matter Survey conducted across the organisation |  | As actions are carried out staff will be informed of changes through communication via the intranet and posts that are shared across departments and units |
|  | Pulse Survey conducted twice yearly |  | Updates will be provided to the Gender Equality Project Control Group as part of the PCG's regular meeting schedule |
|  | Strategies and measures will be added to the Culture & Performance quarterly reporting, presented to our Executive Team and Councillors each quarter |  | Updates may also be made to the Gender Equality Advisory Committee to share Council's actions as an example for supporting and promoting gender equality in the community |
|  | Annual report which summarises the progress of the GEAP over the four quarters, which will include results of each annual People Matter Survey and twice yearly Pulse Survey | | |