

OFFICIAL

ACTION PLAN

Westernport Water

Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-2025



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Acknowledgement

Westernport Water (WPW) acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as First Nations People and that the land, sea and water are of spiritual, cultural and economic importance. We recognise that we provide services on the traditional lands of the Bunurong Peoples of the Kulin Nation. The Bunurong Peoples have managed the resources on Millowl for thousands of years. We acknowledge them and their continued connection to this place, as we go about managing water resources today.

Foreword

It is my privilege to present the WPW *2022-2025 Gender Equality Action Plan*.

We recognise that gender equality is a fundamental human right and a necessary foundation for prosperous, inclusive, sustainable societies, where all are enabled to thrive.

I am proud of what WPW stands for and what we have already achieved thus far. We are committed to providing a safe, inclusive working environment for all employees regardless of gender.

From the first Diversity and Inclusion Plan in 2016, WPW has strived to create an inclusive, equity focused organisation that embraces and celebrates diversity, inclusion, and gender equality. Targeted plans focused on removing unconscious bias from decision making, increasing flexible working practices, and promoting development opportunities, have resulted in balanced representation in leadership, and reduced the gender pay gap to 2.6% at WPW.

We recognise that more needs to be done to achieve gender equality. A comprehensive audit and analysis, and broad consultation with our people, gave us the opportunity to understand what we are doing well and where we need to focus our efforts to continue to progress. This Plan has been created to achieve that, building on what we have already committed to within our *Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2021-24*.

Our Plan outlines three priority areas to further embed gender equality at WPW:

- Priority Area 1 - Safe, respectful workforce culture
- Priority Area 2 - Gendered workforce diversity
- Priority Area 3 - Gender pay gap

This plan outlines a range of actions, and objectives all of which will be monitored with progress tracked monthly, and progress reported to the Executive and the Board annually. Progress reports will also be discussed directly with our *Workplace Consultative Committee* and shared with all staff.

Equality is about supporting all our people to succeed and make the most of their talents and experience. This Plan, together with our Diversity & Inclusion Strategy, will enable us to attract, retain, and develop a high performing workforce, and further embed a diverse, inclusive, and high performing workplace where the skills and potential of all our people are embraced, regardless of gender.

I am proud of what WPW stands for and has achieved so far, and our commitment to continue to break down gender stereotypes and remain a leader in gender equality.

Dona Tantirimudalige, Managing Director

Background

The Gender Equality Act 2020 requires defined entities to address their obligations to promote gender equality in the workplace, and consider gender equality when developing policies and programs and delivering services to the public. The Act recognises that people may experience multiple forms of disadvantage or discrimination related to sexual orientation, gender identity, age, race, ethnicity, religion, disability and/or any other attribute.

The Act introduced a series of new measures for defined entities to comply with and show material progress against, that relate to seven key indicators concerning gender inequality in the workplace. These indicators and their descriptors can be found on the following page.

One of these measures is the development and submission of a Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP). To achieve gender equality in the workplace, the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector states that organisations need to:

- Understand the importance of gender equality
- Identify where change is needed in your organisation
- Plan and implement actions that will achieve progress

In preparation for compilation of the GEAP a workforce data audit was undertaken in July 2021 to determine the baseline level of gender equality in our workplace.

This GEAP provides our current state of equality as at 30 June 2021 against the seven indicators, and details the actions to be undertaken to remediate any areas for improvement.

Case for Change

Gender equality is when people of all genders have equal rights and responsibilities and have the opportunity to shape their own lives. Equity enables people to increase their contribution socially and economically to the community.








In Australia and across the world women experience inequity in many areas of their lives including work. Federal data shows the national gender pay gap is 14.2% (Workplace Gender Equality Agency - May 2021). The Victorian Public Sector pay gap was 10% in 2019.

Women are often underrepresented in leadership roles and overrepresented in lower-level roles. They also make up a higher portion of certain occupations where the average pay is lower and are much more likely to take on flexible work arrangements, such as part time, so they can balance paid work with family responsibilities. All these factors contribute to the gender pay gap and reinforce gender inequality.

We acknowledge that inequality is compounded by intersectional factors such as Aboriginality, age, cultural background, sexual orientation and disability.

WPW recognises the importance of achieving gender equality and the role workplaces can play in addressing inequality.

Gender Equality Indicators

	Workplace gender equality indicator	Description of Indicators
1	 <p>Gender composition of governing bodies</p>	Boards, councils, committees of management and other governing bodies make important decisions about finances and strategy. It's important the 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.
2	 <p>Gender composition of all levels of the workforce</p>	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.
3	 <p>Gender pay equity</p>	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.
4	 <p>Sexual harassment</p>	Sexual harassment in the workplace is common in Australia. Often, victim survivors don't 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.
5	 <p>Recruitment and promotion practices</p>	Gender bias and gender stereotypes can influence recruitment, promotion, and careers progression practices. This means that women may not have access to the same career opportunities as men. Data on recruitment and promotion outcomes can show where women's careers are stalling and help identify strategies to create more equal opportunities.
6	 <p>Gendered work segregation</p>	Women make up a higher proportion of certain occupations and industries, while men are more represented in others. This gendered work 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 is lower in industries and occupations dominated by women.
7	 <p>Leave and flexibility practices</p>	Flexible work 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. It's important that defined entities collect clear data on who is accessing flexible work so they can see what extra support might be needed.

Our Vision

Our vision is to ensure an inclusive work environment where all employees and our customers are treated with respect, and feel valued and supported.

WPW is committed to providing a safe, inclusive working environment for all employees regardless of gender. We have a zero tolerance to any form of bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination. Decisions are based on merit, following fair and transparent processes.

WPW has achieved significant progress in this journey over the past few years. We believe that work is more rewarding when we are accepted and valued for our differences, not judged by them and are guided by our values of:



CARE...to make a difference – because our actions show that we care about who we are, what we do, and each other.



COURAGE...to step forward – because we can achieve great things when we are prepared to step forward.



COMMITMENT...to do great work – because we all want to do the best we can, together.

This GEAP builds on the activities outlined in our *Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2021-24* which addresses the key areas of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural capability, gender equality, generational diversity and breaking down the barriers - where we focus on celebrating and encouraging our employees to recognise both individual and cultural differences.

To achieve gender equality, we recognise and strive to address the additional discrimination experienced with other forms of diversity such as disability, Aboriginality, gender diversity, cultural diversity and sexual orientation.

We will also continue to follow our path in support of the elimination of violence against women addressing inappropriate behaviours and ensuring staff feel safe to report.

Along with our existing practices, policies and procedures, the actions outlined in the GEAP will promote the following gender equality principals:




- 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 on the basis of Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and other attributes.
- Women have historically experienced discrimination and disadvantage on the basis of sex and gender.
- Special measures may be necessary to achieve gender equality.

In the creation and implementation of the GEAP, we will strive to 'further develop the culture, structures and systems that encourage women to stretch their leadership ambitions and support them in their professional and personal development. A flexible working environment, inclusive culture, visible role modelling, and bold transformative practices will assist us in attracting and retaining talented people and supporting them to progress their careers while meeting their aspirations for family and community'¹.

Our Current State

The Workplace Gender Audit conducted in July 2021 gave us the opportunity to understand what we are doing well and where we need to focus our efforts to continue to progress.

	Workplace gender equality indicator	Current State (as of 30 June 2021)
1	 <p>Gender composition of governing bodies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 91% of employees who participated in the People Matter Survey (PMS) believe there is a positive culture within our organisation in relation to employees of different age groups. - The Board (excluding the Chair) composition is 50% women, 50% men and 0% specified gender or preferred not to disclose. - The Chair is a male, which brings overall gender composition to 44% women and 56% men. - 11% of the Board identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. - 22% of the Board “preferred not to say” in regard to identifying as a person with disability. - 78% of the Board are aged between 45 – 64 years. 22% within 34-44 years.
2	 <p>Gender composition of all levels of the workforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WPW employs 84 staff, 37% of whom are women. - Women make up 33% of the Executive Team and 47% of the Leadership team. - Only 31% of full-time role occupants are women. - There is currently no ability to collect ‘self-described gender’ on recruitment and therefore no recorded employees of self-described gender. PMS results for 2021 show that 4% identify as ‘other or prefer not to say’ gender and 12% identify as “other or prefer not to say” sexual orientation. - Other intersectional data shows 2% of employees identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and 7% identify as a person with disability. - Men are overly represented in the three oldest age brackets of the workforce with 100% of employees aged 65+ being male.
3	 <p>Gender pay equity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Federal data shows the national gender pay gap as at May 2021 at 14.2%. - In Victoria as at 2019 the Victorian Public Sector pay gap is 10%. - WPW has an overall Gender Pay Gap of 2.6% (calculated by mean annualised salaries across all employment types excluding casuals), 6.7% (calculated by median annualised base salary excluding casuals) and 10.9% (calculated by median total remuneration excluding casuals). - For part time contract roles there is a 29.2% gender pay gap and in the permanent full time classification women in fact earn 6.2% more than men.

4		Sexual harassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No complaints of sexual harassment were received within this reporting period. - The PMS results (which can often vary due to the anonymity) also reported NIL instances of sexual harassment by respondents. - 95% of PMS respondents agreed that WPW encourages respectful behaviours, 86% feel safe to challenge inappropriate behaviour at work and 91% feel WPW takes steps to eliminate bullying, harassment and discrimination.
5		Recruitment and promotion practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is significant variance in recruitment by gender with only 12% of new recruits in this period women. - Higher duties and training and development activities were relatively equally distributed across genders. - A disproportionate number of women to men took internal secondments (78% women, 22% men). - A significantly higher number of men received permanent promotions (87% men to 13% women). - Over 20% of the exits that occurred identified as having a disability or being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. - 16% of respondents to the annual People Matter Survey disagreed that they had an equal chance at promotion at WPW. - Respondents overall were favourable about recruitment processes within WPW – over 90% agreeing gender, sexual orientation, cultural background or being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander is not a barrier to success in our organisation. 83% agreeing disability is not a barrier.
6		Gendered work segregation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 100% of field roles at WPW are entirely male dominated, with professional (78%), techs & trade roles (83%) also heavily occupied by males. - Women are overly represented in clerical and administration roles (68%), therefore with roughly 2/3 as many women as men in these roles. - Managers were roughly equally allocated (Women 53%, Men 47%).
7		Leave and flexibility practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 59% of Women V 41% of men accessed flexible work arrangements in the reporting period. - Women took a significantly higher amount of paid and unpaid leave over this period with 11 weeks of paid leave (compared to 2 weeks for men) and 14 weeks of unpaid leave. This has enormous implications for women's earnings and future superannuation – with economic insecurity a factor in gender-based violence. - 91% of PMS respondents feel WPW would support them if they needed to take family violence leave. - 95% are confident that if they requested a flexible work arrangement, it would be given due consideration and also that WPW supports employees with family or other caring responsibilities, regardless of gender.

Consultation

WPW developed an extensive consultation strategy to assist in the development of our GEAP.

Consultation has been undertaken with the workforce to ensure a strong understanding by our employees of our current state and to assist in determining our priority areas of action.

Since the Gender Equality Act 2020 was implemented, the Act has been promoted to all employees via our weekly online all staff meetings, Managing Director weekly emails, presentations to key work groups and on the WPW intranet. Employees have been made aware of the requirements under the Act including the Workplace Gender Audit, Gender Impact Assessments (GIA), and the development of the GEAP.

In early 2022 our Workplace Gender Audit findings, along with high level recommendations, were presented to the WPW Board, Executive Team, Leadership Team and Workplace Consultative Committee.

Online, drop-in sessions were offered to all employees interested in learning about our results and contributing toward the development of actions to be included in the plan.

A copy of the presentation was also shared on the WPW intranet and provided to relevant unions.

Employees were encouraged to provide feedback during presentations, directly to the People, Culture & Safety Team and via a confidential online survey. This feedback has been incorporated into our GEAP.

Our Priority Areas for Action



The results of the Workplace Gender Audit demonstrated we are doing well across the seven indicators, particularly against gender composition of governing bodies, gender pay equity and sexual harassment. However, there is more we can do. Through the creation of evidence-based, targeted and practical actions we will ensure our workplace is a true leader in this space.

Delivery of this action plan is the responsibility of all WPW employees. Role models are welcomed but not assumed, and together we choose to challenge our beliefs and biases, adapting our practices and holding ourselves to account every day. Our People, Culture & Safety team, together with our leaders, will continue to drive change, however all employees will be involved in conversations and fully consulted throughout the plan.

Priority Area 1 – Safe, respectful workforce culture

We currently collect intersectional data such as cultural identity, religion and sexual orientation via a confidential staff survey. This de-identified data limits our understanding of the detailed composition of our workforce.

We are committed to developing a workforce culture where staff feel safe to disclose this information, and gender equality and intersectional diversity are celebrated.

Indicator	Objective	Action	Who	2022	2023	2024	2025
	Strive for gender equality across all levels within the organisation by better understanding the composition of the workforce	Review SAP HRIS and onboarding documentation to enable collection of gender identification, sexual orientation, and other intersectional data points for more meaningful workforce composition data.	PC&S	✓			
	Strive for gender equality in our Board	Provide ongoing feedback to the Vic Water Diversity & Inclusion Committee (DISC) on insights in relation to WPW's Board composition.	Board/ Exec	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Investigate Board participation in the PMS.	PC&S	✓			



Build a culture where staff celebrate diversity

Continue long running transformational activities that promote stories of leaders of gender and sexuality diversity, and diverse characteristics (across Water Industry – sharing PRIDE in Water activities for example) to help reduce barriers to identifying.

PC&S ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

Expand on existing activities to further promote diversity including promotion of religious and culturally significant events.

PC&S ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

Internal work around inclusion, psychological safety and psychological harm prevention will further reduce barriers to self-reporting going forward and foster inclusivity.

PC&S ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓



Maintain a zero tolerance on workplace sexual harassment

Continue activities raising awareness of behaviours that constitute sexual harassment and appropriate behaviours in the workplace.

PC&S ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

Review and promote workplace policies addressing behavioural expectations.

PC&S ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓




Ensure employees are aware of confidential reporting options and feel safe to report.

PC&S ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

Priority Area 2 – Gendered workforce diversity




All genders should have the opportunity to work in all areas of our organisation, irrelevant of the type of role and environment. We are committed to increasing participation in non-traditional gender roles to achieve greater gender diversity across all role types and levels.

Recruitment and promotion opportunities are promoted and accessible to all applicants both internally and externally.

Indicator	Objective	Action	Who	2022	2023	2024	2025
	Remove gender and/or intersectionality barriers from all recruitment processes	Review advertising templates and ensure diversity statements are included in all advertisements.	PC&S/ C&E	✓			
		Create a diversity and inclusion page on the WPW website promoting internal activities and partners.	PC&S/ C&E	✓			
		Develop a well-defined advertising strategy that specifically targets a diverse candidate pool.	PC&S/ C&E	✓	✓	✓	
		Ensure all recruitment processes use a gender-balanced and where possible intersectionally-balanced interview panel to ensure freedom from bias and discrimination.	PC&S				✓
	Strive to increase women's applications and success rates in internal promotions	Consult with employees to gain additional feedback on internal promotion and secondment practices to ensure opportunities are transparent and accessible.	PC&S	✓			
		Promote opportunities broadly across the workforce.	PC&S	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Increase gender diversity in non-traditional gender roles	Conduct a review into gender barriers, including intersectional factors, for operational, treatment and customer service roles.	PC&S		✓		
		Utilise Water Industry stakeholders to understand sector-wide barriers including engagement with VicWater's DISC.	PC&S	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Use case studies to promote employee participation in non-traditional roles.	PC&S	✓	✓	✓	✓

Priority Area 3 – Gender pay gap

WPW recognises that the gender pay gap is a result of several factors and is committed to reducing barriers for women to gain economic security by reducing the gender pay gap at all levels of the workforce.

Indicator	Objective	Action	Who	2022	2023	2024	2025
	Create a workforce where flexible work practices are commonplace and accepted for all role types and genders	Review current flexible work options and further develop clear guidance for employee and managers to increase utilisation of suitable flexible work arrangements for all genders.	PC&S/ LT	✓			
	Develop a culture where parental and carers leave are utilised by all genders	Promote parental leave to all employees ensuring males are aware of the leave options available.	PC&S/ LT	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Ensure the leadership group supports and promotes males taking the primary parental role.	PC&S/ LT	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Understand gender pay gaps by role and level to address gender pay inequity	Undertake employment type and classification level analysis to provide deeper insights into the causes of the reported gender pay gap. Assess the findings against the known contributors of gender pay inequity.	PC&S		✓		
		Review and implement where appropriate the Monash Women in Leadership Report findings.	PC&S				✓

Measuring Success

People Culture & Safety will monitor and track progress against the actions in the plan on a monthly basis. Progress reports will be provided to the Board (via the People, Diversity & Community Committee - PDCC) and Executive Team annually utilising workforce data to outline our status against our priority areas.

The Gender Equality Commission has developed a reporting framework and WPW will monitor and evaluate our progress through the Year Two Progress Report and Year Four Workforce Gender Audit.

Progress reports will be discussed directly with the Workplace Consultative Committee and shared with the relevant unions and all staff.

Our Gender Equality Action Plan will be updated every four years.

Resourcing Strategy

WPW is committed to adopting the GEAP and has allocated resourcing to ensure compliance and delivery of commitments as defined under the Gender Equality Act.

Westernport Water Gender Equality Action Plan - Resourcing & Leadership Commitment	
Resource Type	Commitment
Board and Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Foreword and commitment statement from MD. – Bi-annual reporting of progress against actions to Executive and Board level is provided. – Active and visible sponsorship of the principles of gender equality across our organisation takes place. – Executive have and will continue to provide support to break down barriers that get in the way of progressing the actions within this plan.
Leadership Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Leaders at all levels of the organisation are aware of the strategic approach to gender equality in our organisation and actively model and support implementation of the actions within this plan. – Leadership Group are kept informed of progress of actions against this plan. – Leadership Group will be provided training and guidance to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to assist drive implementation of actions within this plan. – Support the release of staff for training requirements. – Lead the workforce to complete GIA on relevant policies, procedures and programs.
Workplace Consultative Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Standing GEAP agenda item. – Minimum of bi-annual meetings to review and discuss progress against key priorities. – Provided with training and support to act as Change Champions across our organisation to implement and successfully embed these actions.
People, Culture & Safety Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Monitor progress monthly and provide reports to Board and the Executive Team bi-annually. – Drive the implementation of GEAP initiatives (0.4 FTE). – Support the workforce to complete GIA on relevant policies, procedures and services.
All Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Attend training and support awareness activities. – Participate in data collection surveys. – Participate in GIA on relevant policies, procedures and services.
Budget Allocation/ Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Dedicated 0.4 FTE HR Coordinator. – SAP HRIS upgrade to capture workforce diversity data. – Unconscious bias and other relevant training as per training budget (\$10,000 per annum). – Cultural and diversity awareness events/activities as per staff event budget.

Communication Plan

The Gender Equality Action Plan and related activities will be shared with our employees through:

- Online or in person all staff meetings
- Managing Director communications
- WPW intranet
- The Workplace Consultative Committee (our organisation's key employee representative group)
- Toolbox meetings
- The events we run

Related documents

- WPW Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2021-24
- WPW Recruitment & Selection Policy and Procedure
- WPW Disability Recruitment Strategy
- Women in Leadership Review 2021, Monash University¹

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on Westernport Water's Gender Equality Action Plan please contact peopleandculture@westernportwater.com.au or call 1300 720 711.



“Westernport Water is committed to providing a safe, inclusive working environment for all employees regardless of gender.”

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