

Mansfield Shire Council

Gender Equality Action Plan

2021-25



Mansfield Shire

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Message from the CEO

I am pleased to present to you Mansfield Shire Council's *Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-2025*.

Mansfield Shire Council recognises that improving gender equality within our organisation and wider community is one of the most important issues of our time. Gender equality and inclusiveness in the workplace will be achieved when all our staff, present and future, have equal access to resources, opportunities and rewards regardless of their gender and social identity.

We have outlined three key priorities for our organisation that we will work to achieve by 2025.

1. Improve our capacity to collect and report on the gender and intersectionality composition of our organisation and identify action required to address limitations.
2. Gender equality is integrated into existing and new Council policies, plans, programs, services and operations.
3. We have a zero tolerance for discrimination, bullying, sexism and nepotism, with all staff empowered to recognise, address and respond to instances of such behaviour.

Our Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) outlines a range of actions that will address these priorities and support achievement of a gender equal workplace.

The GEAP aligns with *Mansfield Community Vision 2040*, *Mansfield Shire Council Plan 2021-25*, and our *Workforce Plan 2021-2025*. Together, implementation of these important strategic instruments ensures we will attract, develop and retain an inclusive, high performing and engaged workforce that continues to deliver outstanding services to our community.

Our vision is for an organisation-wide, integrated and sustainable approach, in which gender equality principles and intersectional factors are embedded in the culture and across all business practices of Mansfield Shire Council by 2025 and beyond.



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Kaylene Conrick

Chief Executive Officer

Date: 30 May 2022

Legislative Framework

The *Gender Equality Act 2020* (the Act) took effect 31 March 2021. The main purposes of the Act are:

1. to require the public sector, Councils and universities to take positive action towards achieving workplace gender equality
2. to require the public sector, Councils and universities to promote gender equality in their policies, programs and services
3. to establish the Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner.

Under the Act, Council has the following obligations:

- ▶ To promote gender equality
- ▶ To conduct gender impact assessments when developing or reviewing any policy, program or service that has a direct and significant impact on the public
- ▶ To develop a workplace Gender Equality Action Plan that includes the results of a workplace gender audit and strategies and measures for promoting gender equality in the workplace (every 4 years)
- ▶ To ensure adequate resources are allocated to developing and implementing the Gender Equality Action Plan
- ▶ To report on the progress of the above (every 2 years).

Gender Equality Principles

It is critical that our organisation aligns with the Gender Equality Principles developed by the Gender Equality Commission. Gender equality is not just about gender, for many people, it may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience due to characteristics such as:

- ▶ Race
- ▶ Ethnicity
- ▶ Aboriginality
- ▶ Religion
- ▶ Gender Identity
- ▶ Age
- ▶ Sexual Orientation
- ▶ Disability

Our GEAP takes these into consideration in the development of strategies and measures to promote gender equality. As our organisation matures, we will review the plan to ensure that we are continuing to address disadvantages or discrimination that a person may experience.

The following gender equality principles in the *Victorian Gender Equality Act 2020*, have guided the preparation of the Mansfield Shire Council Gender Equality Action Plan:

1. All Victorians should live in a safe and equal society, have access to equal power, resources and opportunities and be treated with dignity, respect and fairness.
2. Gender equality benefits all Victorians regardless of gender.
3. Gender equality is a human right and precondition to social justice.
4. Gender equality brings significant economic, social and health benefits for Victoria.
5. Gender equality is a precondition for the prevention of family violence and other forms of

violence against women and girls.

6. Advancing gender equality is a shared responsibility across the Victorian community.
7. All human beings, regardless of gender, should be free to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives without being limited by gender stereotypes, gender roles or prejudices.
8. Gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience on the basis of Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and other attributes.
9. Women have historically experienced discrimination and disadvantage on the basis of sex and gender.
10. Special measures may be necessary to achieve gender equality.

Key Terms and Definitions

Gender Equality	Is defined as the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men, trans and gender-diverse people. Equality does not mean that women, men, trans and gender diverse people will become the same but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on their gender.
Gender Equity	Entails the provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities on the basis of gender. The concept recognise that people may have different needs and power related to their gender and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a <u>manner</u> that rectifies gender related imbalances.
Diversity	Diversity is about what makes each of us unique and includes our backgrounds, personality, life experiences and beliefs, all of the things that make us who we are. It is a combination of our differences that shape our view of the world, our perspective and our approach.
Intersectionality	Refers to a way of seeing people's experiences as shaped by (but not limited to) their race, socio-economic background, sex, gender, and sexuality all at the same time. This overlap or combination of differences makes up a person's unique identity. The point of understanding intersectionality is to also understand the variety of privileges and/or forms of discrimination or exclusion that one may experience simultaneously at any given time (for example gender and race together).
Sex	Refers to a person's biological characteristics. A person's sex is usually described as being male or female. Some people may not be exclusively male or female, which is referred to as intersex. Some people identify as neither male nor female.

Gender	Refers to the way in which a person identifies or expresses their masculine or feminine characteristics. Gender is generally understood as a social and cultural construction. A person's gender identity or gender expression is not always exclusively male or female and may or may not correspond to their sex.
Trans And Gender Diverse	Is an umbrella term used to describe all those whose gender identity is at odds with their biological sex.

Our Culture and the Impacts of Gender Inequality *(Source: Victorian Government)*

Gender inequality affects everyone, including men. It isn't just happening in our homes, it is happening in our workplaces, in our school yards and on our television screens and sporting fields. The journey towards a better culture within our organisation, starts with addressing gender inequality.

Our base line audit analysis of data has provided us with an understanding on where we can improve gender equality. We recognise that gender inequality affects us all in one way or another and some examples of that are below:

Children

- ▶ Gender stereotypes affect children's sense of self from a young age.
- ▶ Boys receive 8 times more attention in the classroom than girls.
- ▶ Girls receive 11% less pocket money than boys.
- ▶ Children classify jobs and activities as specific to boys or girls.

Young People

- ▶ Gender stereotypes affect behaviour, study choices, ambitions and attitudes about relationships.
- ▶ Girls are less likely to take part in organised sport.
- ▶ Girls are less likely to do advanced maths subjects in their final years of school.
- ▶ 1 in 3 Australian women over 15 has experienced physical violence.

Adults

- ▶ Victorian women earn 87.6 cents to every dollar earned by men.
- ▶ Although more women than men complete tertiary education, their graduate salaries are lower.
- ▶ 1 in every 2 mothers experiences discrimination during pregnancy, on parental leave or when returning to work.
- ▶ Victorian women do nearly twice as much unpaid work as men.

Older People

- ▶ Women retire with half the superannuation savings of men.
- ▶ This affects women's financial security, health and wellbeing.
- ▶ More older women are at risk of homelessness than men.

Aboriginal women

- ▶ Aboriginal women's experience of gender inequality is made worse by the impacts of colonisation and violent dispossession.
- ▶ They are 11 times more likely to die from family violence than other women.

Culturally Diverse Communities

- ▶ Women from culturally diverse communities experience racism and discrimination on top of gender inequality.
- ▶ Migrant and refugee women are often in insecure, low-paid work or work they are overqualified for.
- ▶ Women from non-English speaking backgrounds can face barriers to accessing services and understanding their rights.

Men

- ▶ Traditional stereotypes are difficult for many men to live up to. They feel pressure to be a 'real man', to be physically and emotionally strong, and be the main income earner.
- ▶ Many workplaces don't offer men extended parental leave or flexible hours.
- ▶ Men are more likely to drink too much, take unhealthy risks and engage in violence.
- ▶ They are less likely to seek professional help or talk about their problems with friends or family.
- ▶ Men are more likely to commit suicide.

Rural and Regional Women

- ▶ Women living outside of metropolitan areas often do not have access to public services.
- ▶ They are at greater risk of poor health outcomes and family violence.

Trans and Gender Diverse People

- ▶ Trans and gender diverse people may feel forced to hide their gender identity when using services, at school or at work.
- ▶ They are at greater risk of mental illness, verbal and physical abuse and social exclusion.

Women with Disabilities

- ▶ Women with disabilities are more likely to experience family violence and sexual assault.
- ▶ They are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed.
- ▶ They are paid less than men with disabilities and women without disabilities.

7 Key Indicators to Measure Our Gender Equality

These are set by the Victorian Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector. The Gender Equality Action Plan must measure and address our performance against these standard indicators:

- 1 Gender composition at all levels of the workforce**
Are all genders adequately represented at all levels, including senior roles?
- 2 Gender composition of governing bodies**
Councils make important decisions and should reflect diverse voices. Do our elected members have diverse voices?
- 3 Gender pay equity**
Women in Victoria earn 9.6% less than men. This is referred to as the gender pay gap and is influenced by many factors. How do we fare?
- 4 Workplace sexual harassment**
Do people of all genders feel safe in our workplace?
- 5 Recruitment and promotion**
Are all genders given the same opportunities for recruitment and promotion? How do we ensure diversity in our organisation?
- 6 Leave flexibility**
Structural and cultural factors mean women are more likely to work part time and take longer parental leave. We want people of all backgrounds and genders to feel they have equal access flexible leave and working arrangements
- 7 Gendered work segregation occupations and industries**
Which roles have more men or women? How can we achieve better diversity in teams that are traditionally represented by one gender over another?



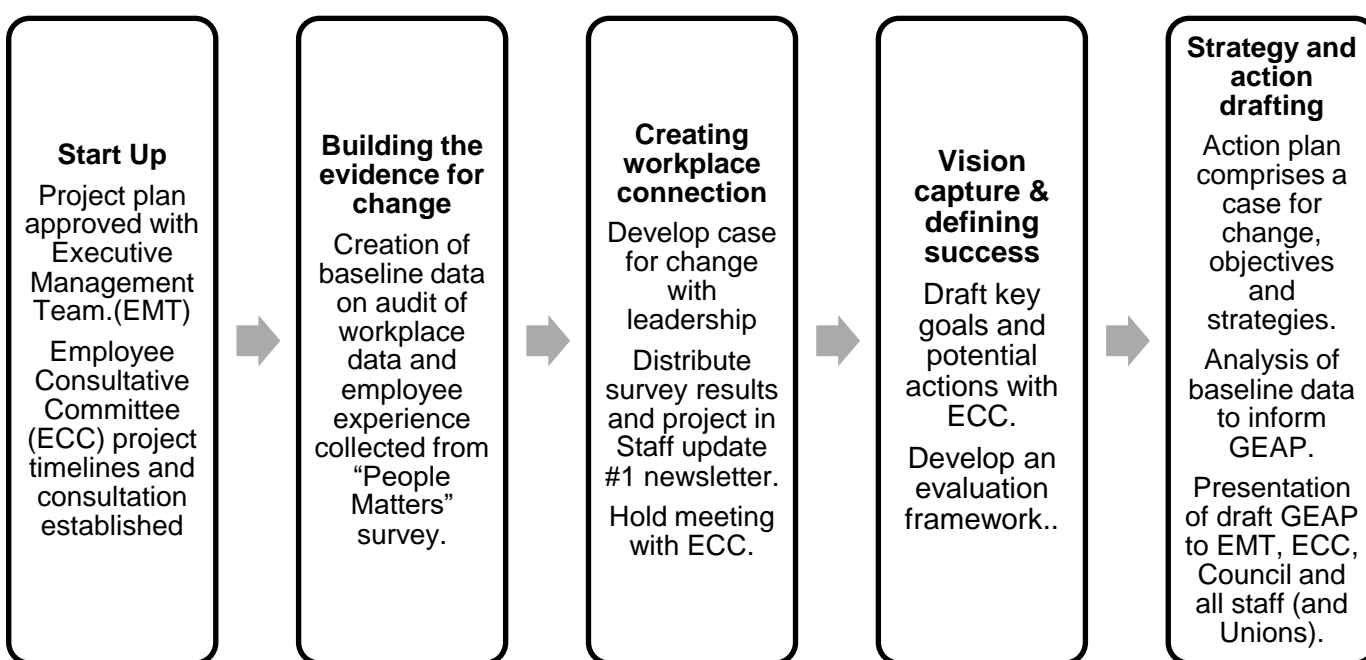
Gender Equality Methodology

The *Gender Equality Act 2020* (the Act) puts new obligations on Council. We must promote gender equality in the workplace, consider gender equality when developing policies and programs and delivering services to the public.

To demonstrate how we'll do that, we must develop a Gender Equality Action Plan and submit it to the Victorian Commissioner for Gender Equality in the Public Sector by 31 May 2022.

Consultation Methodology

The Consultation methodology is through the following stages over a six month time frame.



In March 2022, staff and ECC were invited to provide feedback on the workforce and employee experience data and potential actions. The avenues of consultation included:

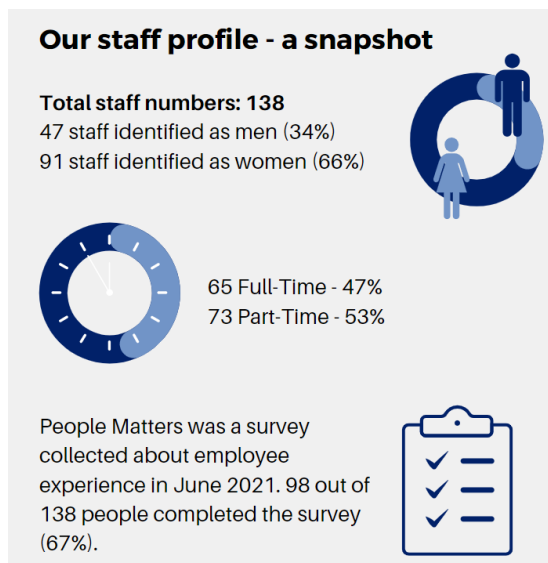
- ▶ Gender Equality Advisory Committee (GEAC)
- ▶ Employee Consultative Committee (ECC) in the form of two sessions where the data, implications and potential actions were evaluated and potential actions agreed.
- ▶ All staff were provided information in the Gender Equity Staff Update newsletter and feedback invited.

Feedback from all avenues of consultation was considered on the Indicators as part of the draft Gender Equality Action Plan.

The Draft GEAP was then distributed widely for further feedback and endorsement, this included Executive Management, the Employee Consultative Committee, all staff, Councillors, Union representatives and Women’s Health Goulburn North East.

The Final Gender Equality Action Plan has received endorsement and has been approved for submission

Mansfield Shire Council Profile at 30 June 2021



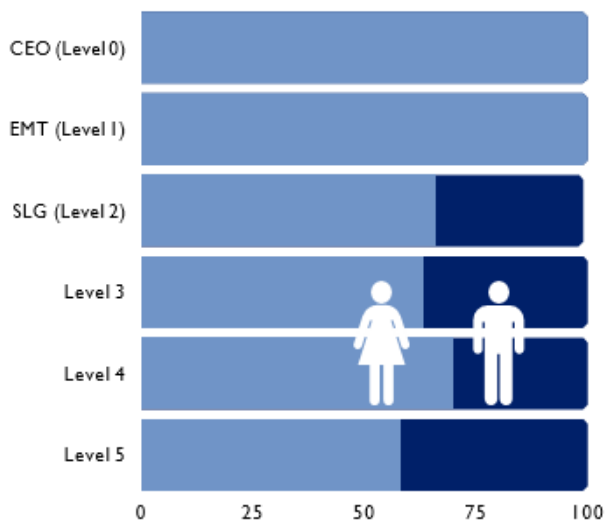
Workforce data was collected 30 June 2021 from HR and payroll records. Note that we don't currently collect data on aspects of employee's identity and intersectionality but this will be addressed in the GEAP.

How Did We Perform Against the Indicators?

1. Gender Composition at All Levels of the Workforce

We had 66% of our workforce identifying as women and, at that time, 66% of our Senior Leadership Group were women. As you look across the reporting levels, there's a similar story the whole way through - men and women are represented in proportion throughout the reporting levels of our organisation.

This chart shows the percentage of men (dark blue) and women (lighter blue) at each reporting level.



2. Gender Composition of Governing Bodies

We are the only Council in Victoria composed of only men.

3. Gender Pay Equity

In a small council like ours with a high proportion of women in leadership positions, our gender pay gap tells a positive story. There's more to the story though, Indicator 7 (Gendered work segregation occupations and industries) has a direct impact on pay equity.

4. Workplace Sexual Harassment

While we didn't receive any sexual harassment complaints for the reporting period, the People Matters Survey results showed 2% of respondents *had* experienced sexual harassment in the workplace.

We have expanded this indicator to consider the workforce experience data indicating how safe people of all genders feel at work.

The data showed that **women are less likely than men** to report that:

- ▶ I feel safe to challenge inappropriate behaviour at work. **M 91% W 59%**
- ▶ My organisation takes steps to eliminate bullying, harassment & discrimination. **M 74% W 44%**
- ▶ My organisation encourages respectful workplace behaviours. **M 91% W 64%**

The data shows that **women are more likely than men to witness and to experience negative behaviours.**

- ▶ Staff who **did not** witness negative behaviours. **M 87% W 66%**

Staff who **did not** experience:

- ▶ Bullying. **M 87% W 67%**
- ▶ Sexual Harassment. **M 100% W 98%**
- ▶ Discrimination. **M 91% W 77%**

5. Recruitment and Promotion

Workforce data on the genders recruited and promoted into positions over the year before July 2021 demonstrates equal opportunities for men and women. However, the People Matters Survey told a different story - our team perceives opportunities differently according to their gender.

- ▶ I feel I have an equal chance at promotion. **M 78% W 48%**

6. Leave Flexibility

Workforce data:

- ▶ 100% of staff who accessed parental leave were women
- ▶ More men than women in our organisation access formal flexible working arrangements (such as a 9 day fortnight, RDO, purchased leave).

The People Matters Survey showed that our team is really positive about flexible working arrangements, that they feel they can access leave and have enough flexibility to meet responsibilities outside of work. However, more men than women in our organisation felt positive about flexible working arrangements, accessing leave, and the potential for how it might affect a career.

7. Gendered Work Segregation Occupations and Industries

Having diverse voices in our work groups brings a broader range of perspectives. It also makes it easier to be fair and enhances pay equity. Currently the majority of women's roles are managerial and health professionals as well as in the community care and administration/finance areas. Men are predominantly employed in the areas of engineering, parks and gardens and field services.



Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-2025

- Priority 1** Improve our capacity to collect and report on the gender and intersectionality composition of our organisation and identify action required to address limitations.
- Priority 2** Gender equality is integrated into existing and new Council policies, plans, programs, services and operations.
- Priority 3** We have a zero tolerance for discrimination, bullying, sexism and nepotism, with all staff empowered to recognise, address and respond to instances of such behaviour.

Feedback from consultation with staff has been built into the outcomes and actions for all indicators. Further comment and feedback should be directed to People and Culture Advisor: Janique Snyder. janique.snyder@mansfield.vic.gov.au

Indicator 1 – Workforce Composition

Outcome	Actions	Priority	When
Demonstrate clear leadership support for gender equality and inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Commitment as a gender equality organisation through public statement and publication of our GEAP on Council's website. ▶ Progress on the implementation of the GEAP is regularly communicated to all staff. 	1,2	2022 2022 ongoing
Build systems to support Council's obligations under the Act and increase organisational capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Identify, source and implement a process which enables us to collect gender diversity data to support the ongoing gender equality reporting requirements and allows the organisation to report on progress. ▶ Develop an evaluation, monitoring and reporting framework to support the Gender Equality Action Plan. 	1,2	2022 2023
Determine process and responsibility for the conduct and recording of Gender Impact Assessments (GIAs) across all service delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Design and roll out appropriate training to support applying an intersectional approach to developing and implementing policies, services and programs. ▶ Implement the Gender Impact Assessment Framework for reviewing policies, services and plans. 	1,2	2022 ongoing

Indicator 2 – Composition of Governing body

Specific Outcome	Actions	Priority	When
Support women and people of diverse voices in participating in local government elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Implement welcoming and enabling initiatives to increase accessibility to women and people with diverse voices. 	1	2024
Improve Council confidence to lead on workforce gender and inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Councillors complete Gender Equitable and Inclusive Leadership training. 	1	2022

Indicator 3 – Gender pay equity

Specific Outcome	Actions	Priority	When
Understand pay gaps at all levels with the view to eliminating these gaps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Establish an understanding on gender pay gap analysis for People & Culture and Payroll. ▶ Investigate and report on pay gaps at all levels and address any bias that exist. 	1	2023

Indicator 4 – Workplace sexual harassment (expanded to include workplace safety)

Specific Outcome	Actions	Priority	When
Ensure our workforce is educated and has the necessary tools to address and respond to sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Develop an employee training program and tools (including Contact Officer training) that clearly articulate what bullying, sexism and discrimination look like and how to call out/prevent it in the workplace. ▶ Ensure all staff undertake bystander action training. ▶ Regular updates and refresher training tracked in the eLearning system (MOOC) available for all staff. ▶ Actively encourage increased participation in the People Matter survey and gender specific surveys. 	3	2022 ongoing June 2023
Ensure a safe environment for reporting of sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Develop leader’s capability in responding to reports by delivery of tailored training. ▶ Review processes and implement changes as required to enable employee and/or bystander to report any unwanted or offensive behaviour within the workplace without reprisals. 	3	2022-23



Indicator 5 – Recruitment and Promotion

Specific Outcome	Actions	Priority	When
Promote gender equality and inclusion through the recruitment process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Review and realign the merit-based recruitment and selection processes through upskilling of recruiters/panel participants. ▶ Review and update employment forms and systems to enable the capture and recording of gender diversity indicators. ▶ Complete a review of all HR documentation to promote inclusivity and gender-neutral language. ▶ Awareness of gender equality and intersectional factors are included in new staff induction. 	1	2022 2023 2023 ongoing
Increase promotion and provision of flexible work arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide and promote flexible parental, carer and family violence leave regardless of gender. ▶ Promote flexible working arrangement options. 	1	2022
Increase career development and opportunities for progression for people of all genders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ensure leadership and professional development opportunities are provided through flexible means allowing an equal number of opportunities for participation. 	1	2022

Indicator 6 – Leave and Flexibility

Specific Outcome	Actions	Priority	When
Increase promotion and provision of flexible work arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Promote flexible parental, carer and family violence leave regardless of gender. ▶ Promote flexible working arrangement options. 	1	2022

Indicator 7 – Gendered Work Segregation

Specific Outcome	Actions	Priority	When
Increase diversity in roles which are traditionally dominated by single genders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Investigate gender dominated work areas and roles. Develop an approach to increasing gender diversity. 	1,2	2022 ongoing

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Gender Equality Action Plan outlines a range of actions which will be undertaken over the remaining 3 years. Council is committed to ongoing monitoring, evaluation and adaption of the Gender Equality Action Plan 2021 – 2025.

As changes in gender equality across the workforce can usually only be observed over an extended period of time, a range of indicators and metrics will be developed to support the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the plans goals.

Our organisation will need to prioritise networking, developing and maintaining partnerships and sharing of resources with neighbouring councils and women's health entities to ensure we meet our obligations under the Act.

As our organisation matures, our GEAP will need to be adjusted to ensure it remains relevant. This is especially important due to several organisational challenges that currently exist:

- ▶ Limited internal access to subject matter experts in the gender equality field.
- ▶ The diversity of the local community being reflected within the workforce
- ▶ Insufficient data and systems to support capturing of information needed to complete the Gender Equality Audits and Action Plan moving forward
- ▶ Resourcing impacting on the ability to provide comprehensive training to all employees regarding gender equality.
- ▶ Gender equality being adequately resourced in an industry that typically may be identified as continually under-resourced due to budget constraints.
- ▶ This is a new priority area the organisation is embarking on without a designated internal team to address the outcomes.

The implementation of the Action Plan will be driven and overseen by the People and Culture unit.