



Mansfield Shire

Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP)

2026-2030

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About this document

Mansfield Shire Council publishes plans and strategies in a consistent format on its website. This document looks different to those. This page explains why.

Legislative requirement

Mansfield Shire Council is a duty holder under the *Gender Equality Act 2020*. As a duty holder, Council is required to prepare a Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) every four years and submit it to the Commissioner for Gender Equality in the Public Sector for evaluation.

Section 10 of the *Gender Equality Act 2020* requires that:

1. A duty holder must prepare a gender equality action plan that includes the results of the workplace gender audit; strategies and measures for promoting gender equality in the workplace, based on the results of that audit; and any other prescribed matters.
2. In preparing a gender equality action plan, the duty holder must take into account the gender equality principles; and consult with the governing body, employees, employee representatives and any other relevant person.
3. A duty holder must ensure adequate resources are allocated to developing and implementing the gender equality action plan.

In addition, duty holders must consider gender pay equity principles when preparing the GEAP, as required by section 5A(1) of the *Gender Equality Regulations 2020*.

Why this document looks different

The Commissioner for Gender Equality in the Public Sector strongly recommends that duty holders use the 2026 GEAP template when preparing their plan. This template follows a prescribed structure designed to make compliance assessment straightforward and consistent across all submitting organisations.

This document is structured in accordance with that template. It is the version submitted to the Commissioner for evaluation and must not be altered in its required sections. As a result, the structure, section headings and layout of this document differ from other Council plans and strategies published on our website.

We are committed to making our gender equality work accessible and understandable to our community. If you have any questions about this plan, please contact us at council@mansfield.vic.gov.au.

A) Planning your GEAP (Preparation and background)

Section 1: Insights from previous gender equality work

The previous Gender Equality Action Plan initiated a range of actions across the organisation, including staff surveys, a pay equity audit, and the review and development of relevant policies and procedures. The data gathered through the 2025 audit demonstrates measurable progress across several indicators since that plan was implemented.

Positive outcomes include:

- Improved gender balance in leadership and governance, including increased representation of women on Council
- Strong and sustained positive employee perceptions of flexible work and inclusion
- Implementation of key initiatives supporting equitable recruitment, promotion and workplace culture
- Increased awareness of gender equality and respectful workplace behaviours through training and communication
- A significant increase in men's parental leave uptake — from an average of 4 weeks to 12 weeks — indicating a positive shift in how caring responsibilities are shared

Not all strategies progressed at the intended pace. The indicators where change was slowest were workforce gender composition (particularly the proportion of women in part-time roles) and gendered occupational segregation. Contributing factors included the small size of the workforce, which limits the pace of measurable change, a rural context that narrowed candidate pools for some roles, and the difficulty of sustaining strategic GEAP work alongside operational priorities. Strategies in these areas have been carried forward and strengthened in this plan.

One area where data collection could be improved is for Indicator 6 — flexible work, family violence leave and caring responsibilities. Baseline data for perceptions of flexible work culture by gender was not systematically collected during the last plan. Establishing this data collection is a priority in the current plan.

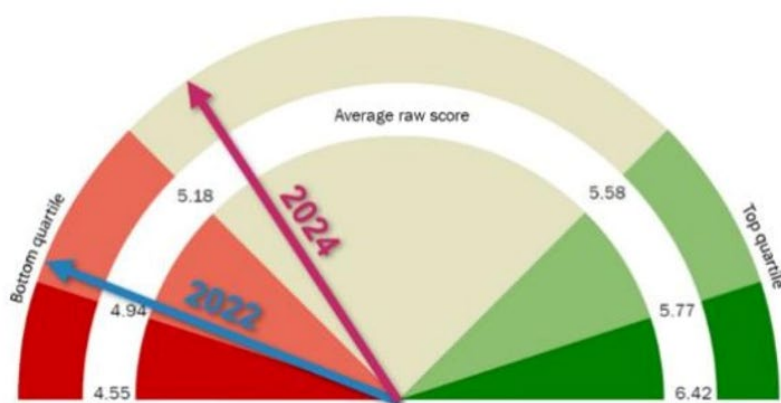
Intersectionality was considered in the previous GEAP but could be more consistently embedded across strategies and policy reviews. This plan takes a more deliberate intersectional approach, applying it explicitly across all indicators and the policy review process.

Key learnings shaping this plan:

- Changes that improve accessibility and inclusion have a positive impact on everyone. Embedding gender equality into core processes rather than standalone initiatives is critical for lasting change
- Visible leadership commitment is a key driver of progress
- Ongoing data monitoring and employee feedback are essential to identify gaps and guide targeted action
- Strengthening data collection, particularly for indicators where collection was limited, is necessary to demonstrate progress in future reporting

Staff engagement survey

A survey was undertaken in 2019 and again in 2022, shortly after the appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer. After the 2022 survey, an action plan to improve culture was developed with direct feedback from staff. In 2024, another survey was conducted using the same format to ensure comparability. While the 2022 survey showed an employee engagement result of 4.98 (unchanged from the score in 2019), the 2024 score showed an improvement of 10%, lifting the organisational sentiment from the bottom quartile to the middle quartiles.



Employee Engagement Index	2022	2024
Average raw score	4.98	5.24
Favourable %	47%	57%
n	117	112

Some key shifts in employee engagement are noted in the following tables.

Items recording the biggest increase in favourable % since 2022	2022	2024	Shift
Mansfield Shire Council helps me to achieve the ideal work-life balance [Investment in people]	47%	66%	+19%
Mansfield Shire Council contributes positively to the wider community [Performance focus]	53%	71%	+18%
Our Executive Management Team acts with integrity [Senior leadership]	45%	63%	+17%
My Department Manager motivates me to work hard towards achieving the organisation's goals [Senior leadership]	51%	68%	+17%
Our Executive Management Team encourages innovation and creative ideas [Senior leadership]	33%	50%	+17%
Our Executive Management Team go out of their way to acknowledge and thank people for their contribution [Senior leadership]	39%	53%	+13%
Mansfield Shire Council is committed to the health and wellbeing of staff [Investment in people]	45%	58%	+13%

Employee engagement items	2022	2024	Shift
I look forward to work each day	45%	60%	+15%
I am proud to be working here	61%	71%	+10%
I have a strong sense of belonging to Mansfield Shire Council	41%	50%	+9%

I would recommend Mansfield Shire Council as a workplace to my family and friends	44%	53%	+8%
I can envisage a fulfilling future for myself at Mansfield Shire Council	39%	47%	+8%
I acknowledge most challenges I face at work are good learning experiences	54%	60%	+6%

Of note is that only three indicators demonstrated a decline in results from 2022 to 2024. Two of these related to systems, which was an anticipated result due to the digital transformation project being partway through and in a period of uncertainty for staff. To mitigate this, Council increased communication about the digital transformation project and rolled out a series of training sessions.

There was also a 3% decline in results related to Council's reward and recognition. In response, a reward and recognition workshop with staff has been held to gather direct feedback from employees.

Items recording a decrease in favourable % since 2022	2022	2024	Shift
The computer software (or other system) I use most, works well [Investment in systems]	42%	35%	-7%
Our systems enable us to serve our customers well [Performance focus]	32%	29%	-4%
Mansfield Shire Council has effective programs for recognising and rewarding achievements of its employees [Investment in people]	22%	20%	-3%

Staff survey follow-up actions

Actions that have been adopted by Council include:

- Review and promotion of the Reward and Recognition Policy, which includes the option to nominate a peer for going above and beyond.
- Ensure staff are aware of the option to take time in lieu to avoid burnout and ensure a flexibility for ebbs and flows in workload in consultation with managers.

Enterprise Agreement

In December 2024, staff voted on an Enterprise Agreement with 94% of votes in favour of the negotiated agreement. This percentage of staff voting yes to the agreement indicates an incredibly successful bargaining process with strong collaboration between all involved.

Benefits in the agreement include:

- expanded personal/carer's leave to cover general personal wellbeing
- expanded prenatal leave to cover IVF and adoption
- earlier access to parental leave
- a change in the remuneration approach which considers the influence of band progression. The quantum was a fixed amount rather than a percentage to ensure that the gap between higher and lower paid bands did not increase.

Section 2: Processes, record keeping and governance

Responsibility for the GEAP sits with the CEO, supported by elected Councillors and the Manager People, Communications & Governance. The Coordinator of Governance monitors record keeping, coordinates review meetings and manages policy update delegations.

The finalised GEAP is available to all staff but may only be amended by direction of the CEO. Relevant policies and procedures are subject to a mandatory review process that includes external audit oversight.

Mansfield Shire Council operates a structured records management system with strict access controls. Paper records are stored and disposed of in accordance with local government guidelines.

Section 3: Leadership commitment

Senior Leaders, as well as Executive Managers, have been provided with information about the development of the GEAP, how it is used to guide positive practices in the workforce and offered the opportunity to contribute to the development of the strategies and actions in this document. Executive managers, elected Councillors and the CEO have contributed to the development of this GEAP in a briefing. Senior Leaders continue to own policies and the requirement for conducting Gender Impact Assessments and considering each policy's impact, both internally and externally.

B) Consultation on audit results and strategies

Section 4: Consultation groups confirmed

Consultation group	Consulted?	Notes
Governing body (Councillors)	Yes	Councillors briefed and invited to provide feedback
Employee representatives (ECC / trade unions)	Yes	Employee Consultative Committee meeting held to discuss findings and suggestions
Employee's (all staff)	Yes	An email was circulated to all staff with the draft GEAP attached, inviting comments and/or feedback.

Section 5: Consultation process

Consultation for this GEAP was conducted in the following stages:

- Staff were advised through the Employee Consultative Committee (ECC) meeting and taken through the previous Gender Equality Action Plan in November 2025. An open invitation was made to contribute to the shaping of the new Gender Equality Action Plan and discussion in the room acknowledged the positive shifts of the organisational environment since the implementation of the first GEAP.
- The ECC was updated and reminded to communicate with their represented teams through email or in person to the People & Culture (P&C) team in February and March.
- In April, the draft document was presented to the ECC for feedback ahead of submission and an email with the draft GEAP attached was sent to all staff inviting comments and/or feedback.
- Councillors were briefed on the development of the new GEAP and invited to provide feedback on proposed strategies. They provided feedback concerning where strategies could include Councillors. Specifically, they wanted to ensure Councillors also received training opportunities that staff were provided. Changes to the Councillor training schedule have been amended, as well as the GEAP, to reflect this.

The early consultation sessions were broad, asking for input into shaping the strategies. The input was used for this, with many of the continuing strategies staying in the plan as staff felt they were working and would continue to improve outcomes. Participants were supported to feel safe through the multiple 'champions' approach – ECC members being kept up-to-date ensured they could field questions, while the P&C team and executives could also take feedback or discuss the strategy.

Section 6: Findings from consultation

How feedback was used to understand audit findings

The 2025 audit data provided the 'what', but consultation with the Employee Consultative Committee (ECC), senior leadership, and councillors provided the 'why'.

- Indicator 1 (Composition): The audit showed women make up 62% of part-time staff. The ECC confirmed this is largely due to caring responsibilities. Consequently, feedback led to the new initiative of advertising pay and flexible options to attract those with home-based commitments.

- Indicator 3 (Remuneration): While mean pay gaps are narrowing, the 19% median gap remained a concern. Leadership and ECC feedback identified that career breaks for parental leave are a key driver. This directly informed the strategy to protect career progression during leave.

Key themes raised by stakeholders

1. Councillors

- Capacity building: Councillors noted the progress from an all-male body to a 3:2 ratio but requested that the staff's equality and inclusion training be adapted for them.

2. The ECC

- The 'Weaponisation' of Safety: A unique theme was the need for a respectful culture that doesn't 'weaponise' complaints, ensuring humor and respect coexist.
- Parental Leave Information Gaps: The ECC raised that internal opportunities (EOIs) often don't reach staff on leave, leading to the strategy to develop a protocol to keep in touch with those on leave – particularly in relation to career opportunities

3. Senior leadership team

- Operational triggers: Leadership identified a need for clearer guidance on when to perform Gender Impact Assessments (GIAs) to ensure consistency.
- Modelling behavior: They agreed that senior male leaders must model parental leave uptake to reduce existing stigma – a good example of this has happened recently.

How stakeholder feedback shaped specific strategies

The table below shows how the Council's engagement took on feedback and implemented it into the GEAP.

Stakeholder group	Feedback/Lived experience	Resulting strategy in this GEAP
ECC	Staff on leave miss internal Expressions of Interest (EOI) opportunities.	Indicator 6: Communicate that leave does not affect job security and ensure information is accessible.
ECC	The same people are often picked for gender-balanced panels, causing burnout.	Indicator 7: Creation of a rotation system for gender-balanced interview panels.
Councillors	It seems like great training is being invested in; we need to access that same knowledge.	Indicator 4: Deliver targeted training for all staff and Councillors.
ECC	'Safety' shouldn't mean a clinical, humorless workplace.	Indicator 4: Deliver training that focuses on respectful workplace behaviour and trust-building.
Leadership	We don't know exactly when a GIA is required for policies – we depend on the Governance team to tell us.	Section 14: Policy register to be updated with GIAs for clarity of expectation. Training to be accessible through the Intranet.

C) Gender equality principles, pay equity principles and intersectionality

Section 7: Gender equality principles

Mansfield Shire Council has incorporated the gender equality principles throughout the development of this GEAP. We recognise that gender inequity is often compounded by other forms of disadvantage related to age, ability, cultural background, gender identity, sexuality and other personal circumstances.

The principles have guided this GEAP in the following ways:

- Building the case for change: the principles frame Council's commitment to gender equality as a fundamental right, not solely a compliance obligation
- Guiding consultation: staff were engaged with the understanding that equal opportunity does not automatically produce equal outcomes
- Informing strategy development: strategies across all indicators address systemic barriers, not just symptoms
- Engaging leadership: senior leaders and Councillors are expected to champion the principles by modelling inclusive behaviour and committing to ongoing development

Relevant policies developed in line with the principles include the Fair Access Policy, the Community Grants Program Policy and the Sexual Harassment Policy. The ongoing review and development of relevant policies and procedures remains a key strategy.

Section 8: Gender pay equity principles

The gender pay equity principles - equal pay for equal value, freedom from bias, transparency, recognition of varied work patterns, sustainability and collaboration — are embedded in both existing and proposed strategies.

Existing strategies that reflect these principles:

- Structured salary reviews and support for career progression
- All positions banded and remunerated according to transparent classification frameworks
- Recruitment and promotion based on merit of experience, skills and suitability
- Sustained commitment to eliminating unjustified remuneration disparities

New strategies proposed in this plan:

- Flexible work policies to help staff manage caring responsibilities, which can be a barrier to career progression
- Regular payroll data analysis to identify and address pay gaps across base salary, bonuses and superannuation
- Active encouragement for men to take parental leave, ensuring leave does not affect promotion or career development

Section 9: Intersectionality

An intersectional approach is applied across all policies and procedures. Building on the previous GEAP, the policy review process ensures that intersectionality is considered and that changes reflect identified needs.

For example, policies on flexible work and leave are reviewed with attention to disadvantages that may stem from age, physical or mental health, family violence history, caring responsibilities, religious or cultural beliefs, housing stress, neurodivergence or other personal circumstances. These considerations are incorporated into procedures and work practices.

D) Making a case for change

Section 10: Case for change and vision

Background: understanding the causes of gender inequality

To understand gender inequality at Council, it is important to consider the broader context of Mansfield Shire. The Shire has developed as a rural farming community with traditional work patterns — men predominantly in outdoor and trade roles, women in caring and household roles. These patterns continue to influence workforce composition and expectations.

Access to services is a significant factor. Limited public transport means most residents depend on private vehicles, and travel times to specialist services range from 45 minutes to three hours or more. People with caring responsibilities — disproportionately women — can find the lack of local services particularly challenging.

Housing affordability is also a concern. Median property prices in Mansfield Shire are considerably higher than in many comparable regional areas, contributing to financial stress and housing insecurity. These broader community factors are relevant to understanding the intersectional nature of inequality within Council's workforce.

Internal vision

The following vision was developed collaboratively with Council staff. It sets out how we aim to work together as an organisation and reflects our shared values. It is distinct from Council's community-facing vision.

Three main objectives

1. Vision - Together we work with our community to make Mansfield Shire an even better place.
2. Mission - As one team, we plan, engage, communicate and deliver for our community
3. Values – The values that drive the day-to-day delivery of our services and functions and how we work together are:
 - **Leadership & Advocacy**
 - **Engagement & Collaboration**
 - **Integrity & Respect**
 - **Improvement & Innovation**

E) Identifying underlying causes of gender inequality

Section 11: Underlying causes

Prior to the 2024 election, Mansfield Shire Council's governing body was comprised of five Councillors, all male. It is possible that at the time community members favoured male candidates as preferred options in terms of leadership and voted accordingly. This imbalance was corrected in the Council election of 2024, when two women were elected among five Councillors.

The Shire's rural character and history of traditional work patterns have contributed to occupational gender segregation within Council's workforce. The workforce is gradually becoming more diverse. However, limited access to community services, cultural facilities and affordable housing can affect staff retention over time.

Intersectionality is a key consideration. Disadvantage can be compounded for staff managing disability, mental health challenges, family violence, financial stress, caring responsibilities or limited access to services. These factors disproportionately affect women and create barriers to workforce participation and career progression.

While these challenges are real, the data gathered for this GEAP shows positive trends across many indicators. Council is committed to building on this progress throughout the life of the new GEAP.

Section 12: Indicator data analysis and strategies

Indicator 1: Gender composition of all levels of the workforce

Audit data analysis

Key findings — 2025

- Overall gender composition: Women 53%, Men 46.5%, Self-described 0.5%
- Part-time workers (42.5% of workforce): Women 62%, Men 37%, Self-described 1%
- Senior leaders: Women 58%, Men 42%

Overall gender composition is relatively equal, with women comprising a small majority. However, women continue to make up 62% of part-time staff, which may reflect a disproportionate burden of caring responsibilities compounded by limited local childcare, elder care and disability support services.

Strategies to continue

- Maintain flexible work policies and ensure guidance is available for managers and leaders
- Apply a systemic approach to gender-neutral pay outcomes
- Deliver bystander, cultural awareness and gender equity training across the organisation
- Continue gender-neutral recruitment strategies

New initiatives

- Improve flexible working options through encouragement, development and active promotion
- Ensure recruitment advertising clearly states pay and flexible options to attract applicants with caring responsibilities
- Provide targeted guidance for managers to support flexible work practices

Measures	Targets
• Gender composition of Council overall • Gender composition of part-time workers • Gender composition of senior leaders • Staff perceptions of gendered segregation (survey)	Maintain overall gender parity. Reduce women's share of part-time staff from 62% toward 55% or below by 2029, through targeted flexible work and recruitment strategies.

Strategy	Responsible	Timeline	Related indicators
Maintain flexible work policies; ensure manager guidance is available	People, Communications & Governance / SMT	Ongoing	Ind. 3, 6
Apply gender-neutral pay approach; eliminate unjustified pay disparities	P&C / EMT	Ongoing	Ind. 3
Deliver bystander, cultural awareness and gender equity training	P&C / SMT	Bi-Annual	Ind. 4
Continue gender-neutral recruitment strategies	P&C / Hiring Managers	Ongoing	Ind. 5, 7
Improve flexible working options through promotion and development (NEW)	P&C / SMT	Ongoing	Ind. 6
Recruitment advertising to clearly state pay and flexible options (NEW)	P&C	2026	Ind. 3, 5

Indicator 2: Gender composition of the governing body

Audit data analysis

Key findings — 2025

- Governing body prior to 2024: 5 men, 0 women
- Governing body following 2024 election: 3 men, 2 women

The election of two women to Council in 2024 is a meaningful improvement on the previous all-male governing body.

Strategies to continue

- Promote women's leadership programs, including those with a rural and regional focus
- Promote the benefits and opportunities of leadership in local government to women in the community
- Support Councillors to engage with the community in ways that recognise and celebrate the contribution of female Councillors
- Promote engagement with the Australian Local Government Women's Association and other networks supporting women in local government

New initiatives

- Ensure gender balance in promotional and advertising activities related to local government leadership opportunities
- In the lead up to the next election, actively engage in targeting a diverse audience for promoting interest in local government leadership.

Measures	Targets
• Gender composition of governing body • Gender of mayoral and deputy mayoral appointments • Participation in leadership programs by gender • Gender of electoral candidates over time	By 2029, aim for at least 40% female participation in relevant leadership programs and a continued increase in female candidates at Council elections.

Strategy	Responsible	Timeline	Related indicators
Promote women's leadership programs with rural and regional focus	P&C / SMT	Ongoing	Ind. 1, 5
Promote local government leadership opportunities to women in the community	P&C / SMT / Communications	Ongoing	Ind. 1

Strategy	Responsible	Timeline	Related indicators
Support Councillors to celebrate female Councillors' community contributions	Executive Services / PCG	2027	
Promote engagement with the Australian Local Government Women's Association	Executive Services / PCG	2027	Ind. 1
Targeted outreach to attract people from diverse backgrounds into leadership (NEW)	People, Communications & Governance Department (PCG)	2028	Ind. 1, 7
Gender balance in all promotional activities for local government opportunities (NEW)	PCG	2027	Ind. 7

Indicator 3: Equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value

Audit data analysis

Key findings

Mean total remuneration — general staff:

- 2023: Women ~\$86.5k, Men ~\$90.5k (4.5% gap in favour of men)
- 2025: Women ~\$98.1k, Men ~\$95.3k (approximately 3% in favour of women)

Mean total remuneration — senior leaders:

- 2023: Women \$128.9k, Men \$126.8k (1.70% in favour of women)
- 2025: Women \$125.6k, Men \$129k (2.64% in favour of men)

Supplementary measures:

- Mean base salary pay gap: 6.4% in favour of men
- Median total remuneration pay gap: 19.0% in favour of men

Pay equity at the mean level is positive and has improved significantly. However, the median figures indicate an underlying disparity that requires continued attention. All positions are banded and remunerated according to transparent classification frameworks.

Strategies to continue

- Structured salary reviews and support for career progression
- All positions banded and remunerated according to transparent classification frameworks
- Recruitment and promotion decisions based on merit
- Sustained commitment to eliminating unjustified remuneration disparities

New initiatives

- Build on flexible work policies to help staff manage caring responsibilities, which can affect career progression and earnings
- Annual payroll data analysis to identify and address pay gaps, including base salary, bonuses and superannuation
- Actively encourage men to take parental leave; ensure leave does not affect promotion or career development

Measures	Targets
• Mean total remuneration gender pay gap (overall) • Mean total remuneration senior leader pay gap • Mean base salary pay gap	Maintain the positive mean remuneration trend. By 2029, reduce the mean base salary gap from 6.4% to under 3%, and reduce the median total remuneration gap of 19% by at least 50%.

Measures	Targets
- Median total remuneration pay gap - Median base salary pay gap	

Strategy	Responsible	Timeline	Related indicators
Continue structured salary reviews and career progression support	P&C / SMT	2026	Ind. 1, 5
Maintain transparent classification frameworks for all positions	P&C	Ongoing	Ind. 5
Merit-based recruitment and promotion decisions	P&C / EMT	Ongoing	Ind. 5
Sustained commitment to eliminating unjustified remuneration disparities	EMT	Ongoing	
Build on flexible work policies to reduce caring-related career barriers (NEW)	P&C	Ongoing	Ind. 1, 6
Annual payroll data analysis for gender pay gaps (NEW)	P&C / Finance	2027	
Encourage men to take parental leave; protect career progression during leave (NEW)	P&C / SMT	Ongoing	Ind. 6
Provide training opportunities for management regarding banding entitlements, requirements and directives (NEW)	P&C	2027	Ind. 5
Ensure banding information is available to all staff to increase transparency and enhance opportunities for advancement (NEW)	P&C / Finance	2026	Ind. 5

Indicator 4: Sexual harassment in the workplace

Audit data analysis

Key findings — 2023 vs 2025

- Staff reporting experiences of sexual harassment: reduced from 10% (2023) to 5% (2025)
- Staff satisfaction with how issues are handled: increased from 50% to 75%
- Rate of reporting more than doubled between 2023 and 2025
- Of those who experienced harassment in 2025: 40% made a formal complaint

Main reasons staff did not make a formal complaint:

- Belief that no action would be taken
- Fear of negative consequences
- Perception that the behaviour was not serious enough
- Preference to manage the situation informally

While the data shows clear improvement, the fact that 60% of those who experienced harassment did not make a formal complaint indicates that trust in reporting processes needs to be further strengthened.

Strategies to continue

- Promote and implement the standalone sexual harassment policy
- Deliver respectful workplace, complaint-handling and active bystander training
- Maintain the Wellbeing Coordinator role to support early intervention and employee wellbeing

New initiatives

- Promote the Coordinator of Organisational Wellbeing as a complaint pathway for reports of sexual harassment
- Deliver targeted training in respectful workplace behaviour, bystander response, cultural awareness and gender equity for all staff and Councillors
- Offer multiple formal and informal reporting channels
- Build trust in reporting processes by:
 - Limiting information spread to those who need to know and maintaining confidentiality throughout
 - Explicitly stating in policies — and enforcing — that victimisation of those who report or are reported against will not be tolerated
 - Clearly communicating what happens after a report is made, including investigation steps, timelines and potential outcomes

Measures	Targets
• Proportion of staff reporting experiences of sexual harassment	Aim for zero occurrence. By 2029, increase formal complaint lodgement from 40% to at

Measures	Targets
• Rate of formal complaint lodgement among those who experienced harassment • Staff satisfaction with complaint handling • Staff perceptions of safety and trust in reporting processes (survey)	least 70% of those who experience harassment, and maintain satisfaction with complaint handling above 80%.

Strategy	Responsible	Timeline	Related indicators
Promote and implement the standalone sexual harassment policy	P&C / EMT	2026	
Deliver respectful workplace, complaint-handling and bystander training	P&C	2027	Ind. 1
Maintain Wellbeing Coordinator for early intervention and employee wellbeing	P&C / Executive Services	Ongoing	Ind. 1, 5
Promote Wellbeing Coordinator as a complaint pathway for sexual harassment (NEW)	P&C	Ongoing	
Offer formal and informal reporting channels including anonymous options (NEW)	P&C / IT	2026	
Implement trust-building protocols: confidentiality, anti-victimisation, clear process communication (NEW)	P&C / SMT	2027	

Indicator 5: Recruitment and promotion practices

Audit data analysis

Key findings — 2025

- Gender composition of new recruits: Women 55%, Men 44%, Self-described 1%
- Gender composition of promotions: Women 52%, Men 48% — broadly equitable
- Staff perceptions of recruitment fairness: 62% favourable
- Staff perceptions of promotion fairness: 42% favourable, 38% neutral, 20% unfavourable

Recruitment and promotion rates are broadly equitable. However, 20% of staff hold an unfavourable view of promotion practices. Clearer and more transparent communication around promotion pathways would improve staff confidence and satisfaction.

Strategies to continue

- Maintain recruitment practices that support gender balance and are based on merit
- Promote training and development opportunities to all staff
- Continue the Performance Development Review process, which supports staff to identify career goals and plan their progression
- Use internal expressions of interest to support staff advancement
- Implement transparent promotion practices that keep staff informed of advancement opportunities, including higher duties, promotion and learning and development
- Consult with staff on structural changes and promotion opportunities

New initiatives

- Create more accessible pathways for staff to express interest in advancement via training and development, such as a future leaders pool
- Support advancement for all staff using practices that account for barriers related to gender, cultural background, sexuality, disability, illness, adversity or other circumstances

Measures	Targets
• Gender composition of recruited employees • Gender composition of promoted employees • Perceptions of recruitment fairness (staff survey) • Perceptions of promotion fairness (staff survey)	Maintain equitable balance in recruitment and promotion. By 2029, reduce the unfavourable perception of promotion practices from 20% to under 10%, and increase the favourable perception from 42% to at least 60%.

Strategy	Responsible	Timeline	Related indicators
Continue merit-based, gender-balanced recruitment practices	P&C	Ongoing	Ind. 1, 3
Promote training and development opportunities to all staff	P&C / SMT	Ongoing	Ind. 1
Performance Development Review process with career goal-setting	P&C / SMT	2026	Ind. 3
Internal expressions of interest for advancement opportunities	P&C	Ongoing	
Consult staff on structural changes and promotion opportunities	EMT	Ongoing	Ind. 1
Create more accessible pathways for staff to express interest in advancement via training and development, such as a future leaders pool (NEW)	P&C / SMT	Ongoing	
Inclusive advancement practices accounting for intersectional barriers (NEW)	P&C	Ongoing	Ind. 1, 7

Indicator 6: Flexible work, family violence leave and caring responsibilities

Audit data analysis

Key findings — 2023 vs 2025

Parental leave:

- 2023: Women average 22 weeks (74%), Men average 4 weeks (26%)
- 2025: Women average 22 weeks (64%), Men average 12 weeks (36%)

Uptake of flexible work:

- 2023: 33% of workforce had formal flexible work arrangements — Women 55%, Men 45%
- 2025: 42.5% of workforce on part-time — Women 62%, Men 37%, Self-described 1%

Note: data collected for this indicator was limited, and this area requires further development. A data collection plan will be established in 2026 to build a baseline for perceptions of flexible work culture by gender, uptake of carer's leave, and formal flexible work arrangements. This will support more targeted reporting in the 2028 progress report. The significant increase in men's parental leave — from an average of 4 weeks to 12 weeks — is a positive trend indicating more equitable sharing of caring responsibilities and demonstrates the impact of strategies implemented in the previous GEAP.

Strategies to continue

- Promote flexible work options, including remote work and part-time work
- Ensure recruitment activities clearly state flexible working arrangements on offer
- Ensure information on leave entitlements is readily available to all staff
- Encourage senior male leaders to model parental leave and flexible work uptake

New initiatives

- Allow leave to be taken in broken periods rather than a single block, where operationally feasible
- Proactively communicate that leave does not affect job security or career progression, including a new protocol to keep in touch with those who are on leave to ensure they don't miss internal career opportunities.
- Ensure all staff are aware of their leave entitlements, and actively reduce any stigma around parental leave
- Develop a data collection plan for perceptions of flexible work culture by gender

Measures	Targets
• Average weeks of parental leave by gender	By 2029, increase men's share of parental leave from 36% toward 45%. Reduce women's share of part-time roles from 62%

Measures	Targets
- Gender composition of parental leave takers - Uptake of flexible work by gender - Perceptions of flexible work culture by gender (from 2026) - Gender gap in carer's leave utilisation	toward 55%. Establish baseline data for perceptions of flexible work culture by gender by end of 2026.

Strategy	Responsible	Timeline	Related indicators
Promote flexible work options, including remote and part-time work	P&C	Ongoing	Ind. 1, 3
Ensure recruitment clearly states flexible working arrangements	P&C	Ongoing	Ind. 5
Ensure leave information is accessible to all staff	P&C	2026	
Senior male leaders to model flexible work and parental leave uptake	EMT	Ongoing	Ind. 1, 2
Allow leave to be taken in broken periods where operationally feasible (NEW)	P&C / Payroll	2026	Ind. 3
Communicate that leave does not affect job security or career progression (NEW)	P&C / SMT	Ongoing	Ind. 3, 5
Ensure all staff know their entitlements; reduce stigma around parental leave (NEW)	P&C / SMT	Ongoing	Ind. 3

Indicator 7: Gendered segregation within the workplace

Audit data analysis

Key findings — 2025

- Overall gender composition: Women 53%, Men 46.5%, Self-described 0.5%
- 82% of employees report favourable perceptions of gendered segregation
- Community Health and Wellbeing: 26 female staff, 1 male
- Capital Works and Operations: 57 male employees, 7 female (1 female in leadership)

While the overall gender balance is relatively equal, stark imbalances in specific teams reflect a broader pattern of occupational segregation. Men predominate in outdoor and trade roles; women in caring and community roles. Addressing this requires both targeted recruitment and a shift in how roles are promoted and perceived.

Strategies to continue

- Continue to review job descriptions and recruitment language to remove gender-coded words
- Maintain flexible work practices including varied start and finish times, parental leave and remote work options
- Use gender-balanced interview panels

New initiatives

- Focus recruitment on essential skills rather than an exhaustive list of criteria, as research shows women are less likely to apply unless they meet all requirements
- Include salary ranges in all recruitment advertising
- Partner with educational institutions and professional networks to diversify applicant pools
- Use language in job advertising that appeals to a wider range of motivations — emphasising teamwork, impact and practical skills
- Promote the career pathways, leadership opportunities and salary growth available in traditionally female-dominated areas
- Train hiring managers to recognise and reduce unconscious bias
- Creation of a rotation system for panel members to ensure gender balance without burning out staff who are skilled at recruitment interviews.

Measures	Targets
• Occupational gender segregation by team and work area • Gender of applicants by role type (to be collected) • Staff perceptions of gendered segregation (survey)	Maintain overall gender balance and favourable perceptions (above 80%). By 2029, increase female representation in Capital Works and Operations, and male representation in Community Health and Wellbeing, by at least 10 percentage points in

Measures	Targets
Gender balance of promotion and leadership opportunities by team	each. Collect applicant data by gender and role type from 2026.

Strategy	Responsible	Timeline	Related indicators
Review job descriptions annually to remove gender-coded language	P&C	Ongoing	Ind. 5
Maintain flexible work practices to support diverse applicant pools	P&C / EMT	Ongoing	Ind. 1, 6
Continue gender-balanced interview panels	P&C / Hiring managers	Ongoing	Ind. 5
Focus recruitment on essential skills to broaden applicant pools (NEW)	P&C	2027	Ind. 5
Include salary ranges in all recruitment advertising (NEW)	P&C	Ongoing	Ind. 3, 5
Partner with educational institutions and networks to diversify pipelines (NEW)	P&C	2027	Ind. 5
Redesign job advertising for female-dominated roles to appeal more broadly (NEW)	P&C / Communications	Ongoing	Ind. 5
Promote leadership pathways and career growth in female-dominated areas (NEW)	P&C / SMT	Ongoing	Ind. 2, 5
Unconscious bias training for all hiring managers (NEW)	P&C	Ongoing	Ind. 5

F) Resourcing the GEAP

Section 13: Identifying resources

Implementing this GEAP requires ongoing staff surveys and data analysis, cross-departmental collaboration to support training, and systemic improvements to policies and practices. Leadership engagement is critical, and some areas of the organisation may need training to support effective implementation.

The People and Culture team plays a central role in recruitment, retention, data collection and reporting. They also support staff and leaders to reduce workplace harms arising from inequalities, discrimination, unconscious bias, harassment or bullying.

Section 14: Resourcing plan

Resource	Detail
People and Culture team	The P&C team allocates dedicated time to GEAP implementation and monitoring as part of their work plan, alongside business-as-usual functions.
Coordinator of Organisational Wellbeing	This 0.6 FTE position (created 2025) provides dedicated capacity to build inclusive and equitable practices across the organisation.
Training budget	Council maintains a dedicated training budget for all staff. GEAP-related training — including bystander response, cultural awareness, gender equity and unconscious bias — is funded from this budget.
Governance and records management	The Coordinator of Governance monitors record keeping, coordinates review meetings and manages policy review delegations using existing systems.
Leadership commitment	The CEO provides oversight. Executive managers embed GEAP strategies within their team plans. Councillors are kept informed and engaged through regular briefings.
Monitoring and review	Annual internal GEAP progress review is conducted. The biennial staff survey includes GEAP-relevant questions. Progress is reported to the Commissioner at required intervals.

Additional comments

The rural and regional context of Mansfield Shire presents inherent recruitment challenges. A population expected to reach approximately 11,000 by 2026 means a relatively small local pool of prospective employees. This makes active and innovative recruitment strategies particularly important.

The meaningful implementation of this GEAP directly supports those strategies. A safe, inclusive and flexible workplace attracts a wider range of candidates and improves the retention and productivity of current staff. It is essential that leaders across the organisation are genuinely invested in this process, and that all staff feel part of its implementation. The ongoing use of Gender Impact Assessments for community-facing activities and policy development is part of core business and will continue to benefit both Council and the community.