

Gender Balance Target

For Senior Leadership in
Local Government Toolkit



Australian Government
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet



A message from the President

I announced that Local Government Professionals Australia would be pushing for a gender balance of 40 percent women, 40 percent men, and 20 percent of any gender in local government leadership roles by 2025 in December 2020 as part of the wider imperative to increase diversity in our ranks.

There is an expectation that local government be truly representative of the communities it serves and achieving gender balance at that senior level is just one step toward expanding the diversity and equity of representation our sector needs.

In practice, this means creating the opportunities that allow everyone in our organisations to thrive – not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because of the enormous benefit our organisations and communities gain from the elimination of structural barriers to truly equitable workplaces that will see the best talent come – and stay – in local government.

This toolkit is designed to empower local government professionals and their organisations to reach this gender balance target in their own executive leadership teams for the benefit of their staff and the communities they serve. This will not be the last step in local government’s inclusivity journey, but it is an important one.

I will be bringing these resources to my own local government, and I hope they benefit yours just as much.

Victoria MacKirdy
National President

Local Government Professionals Australia

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Workplace Gender Equity – The Business Case

Gender equity in the workplace is important not only for the imperative of fairness but for the peak performance of organisations. While gender equity is considered by many the right thing to do, it also brings with it tangible, positive outcomes for the running of the complex organisations that are local governments. It is achieved when all staff have access to the same opportunities and rewards regardless of their gender. This does not ignore gender but rather acknowledges the unique, gendered, structural challenges employees face to reach an equitable outcome.

The benefits for both communities and local governments include stronger organisational performance, better decision making, and ultimately better service delivery. Reputationally, a gender-balanced local government is also a sign of an employer of choice in any community that can attract and retain the best staff who can holistically understand and meet the needs of diverse communities.

Communities across Australia are increasingly demanding that local government leadership- both elected members and staff reflect the diversity of the communities they represent, including the representation of women in senior leadership positions. While some local governments have made strong progress toward this equity, there is still an imbalance across the sector broadly.

Barriers to achieving gender balance in senior leadership roles are myriad and often intertwine. They include issues with workplace culture, lacking pipeline of female leaders, shortage of role models and mentors, inflexible work practices, affordability and accessibility of childcare, gender role stereotypes and sexism, and, in some cases, the increasing politicisation of executive roles. While progress requires change on multiple fronts, none of these challenges are insurmountable and the benefits outweigh the costs.

Local Government Gender Balance Target – 40:40:20 by 2025

A metric is needed to accurately measure success. Local Government Professionals Australia has set a gender balance target as a practical means of helping local governments track their gender diversity progress. While this document seeks to encourage local governments to identify and tackle obstacles in the way of improving this gender equity in their workforces, the target is a practical way of measuring the success of these efforts.

A gender balance target of 40:40:20 in executive leadership teams by 2025 was announced by Local Government Professionals Australia in December 2020. The 40:40:20 ratio refers to leadership made up of 40 per cent men, 40 per cent women, and 20 per cent unspecified. This target, already adopted by many other public sector organisations, allows for malleability in the gender make-up of a team. While the overall local government workforce broadly meets this target, executive leadership teams are disproportionately represented by men. While these leadership positions are the most visible and influential to both the internal workforce and the community, they are also pivotal in affecting the trajectory of an organisation.

In assessing a local government’s leadership gender balance, the executive leadership team is defined here as the top two tiers in the organisation structure which would include roles typical to local government such as Director, Executive Director, General Manager, and Chief Executive/Finance/Technology Officers. The 40:40:20 target is applicable to local government organisations with an executive leadership team of four or more members. Organisations with three members in the Executive Leadership Team would instead apply a 1:2 split, while small local governments with only one or two executive positions would instead be encouraged to apply the target to its broader management teams.

Local governments are asked to measure the balance in their current executive leadership team, consider what improvements need to be made to achieve (or retain) gender balance, and commit to achieving this balance by 2025. This document includes resources to help you achieve this for the benefit of your organisation, your staff, and your community.

The Data

Data collection process

Local Government Professionals Australia collected data on the gender balance of executive leadership teams from publicly available 2019-20 Annual Reports of all 537 Australian local governments, current as of March 2021. Senior leadership positions covering the top two tiers of an organisation’s structure were the target of the study. The position titles of these staff varied across the country but are broadly grouped together as Directors, Executive Directors, General Managers, and Chief Executives.

If a local government had multiple people within a role during the financial year, the person who was in that position on 30 June 2020 was counted. If a Director-level position was vacant, the position was not counted. If the gender of a staff member was indiscernible in the Annual Report, organisational charts or senior management team profiles on organisation websites were referenced. If names were not present, official meeting minutes from Council meetings were also consulted. Further gaps in information were filled by referring to the Municipal Yearbook publication for FY19-20.

Executive leadership teams

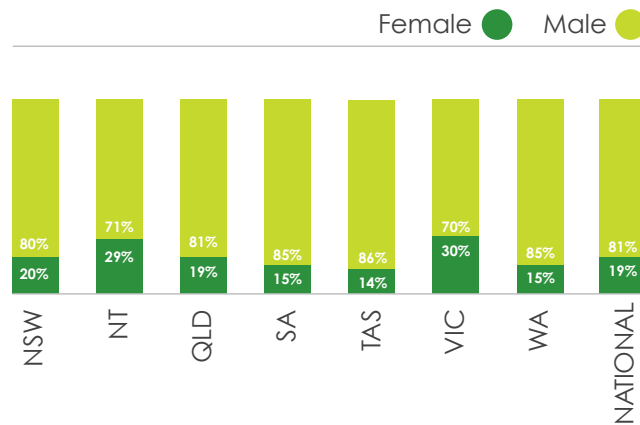
The gender balance target of 40:40:20 (40 per cent female, 40 per cent male, 20 percent unspecified) is applied to local governments with executive leadership teams of four or more which represents 69 per cent of local governments. The average size of an executive leadership team was four to five including the CEO/GM.

19 per cent of local governments have three executive leadership team members and would follow a 1:2 unspecified split. 12 per cent of local governments have only one or two people in the executive team and as such would be exempt from the target. 30 smaller local governments, accounting for 5 per cent of the total, are represented solely by a CEO. These small local governments are encouraged to apply targets to their broader management teams.

Leaders and Directors

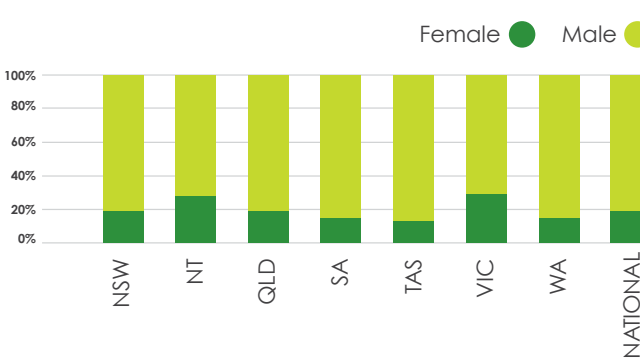
Senior leaders, namely CEOs and GMs, are 81 per cent male and 19 per cent female, with female representation slightly higher than Australia’s all-industry average of 17 per cent. Victoria has the highest per centage of female CEOs at 30 per cent, closely followed by the Northern Territory with 29 per cent, while on the lower end female representation in Tasmania sits at 14 per cent, closely followed by Western Australia and South Australia at 15 per cent.

CEO and Gender



Directors (or their equivalents) are 67 per cent male and 33 per cent female on average nationally. Tasmania, South Australia, and Victoria are at the higher end of female representation at 37-39 per cent, while Western Australia has the lowest female Director representation at 29 per cent. The national average for local government slightly trails the all-industry sector average of 34 per cent female representation in these executive positions.

Gender and Directors

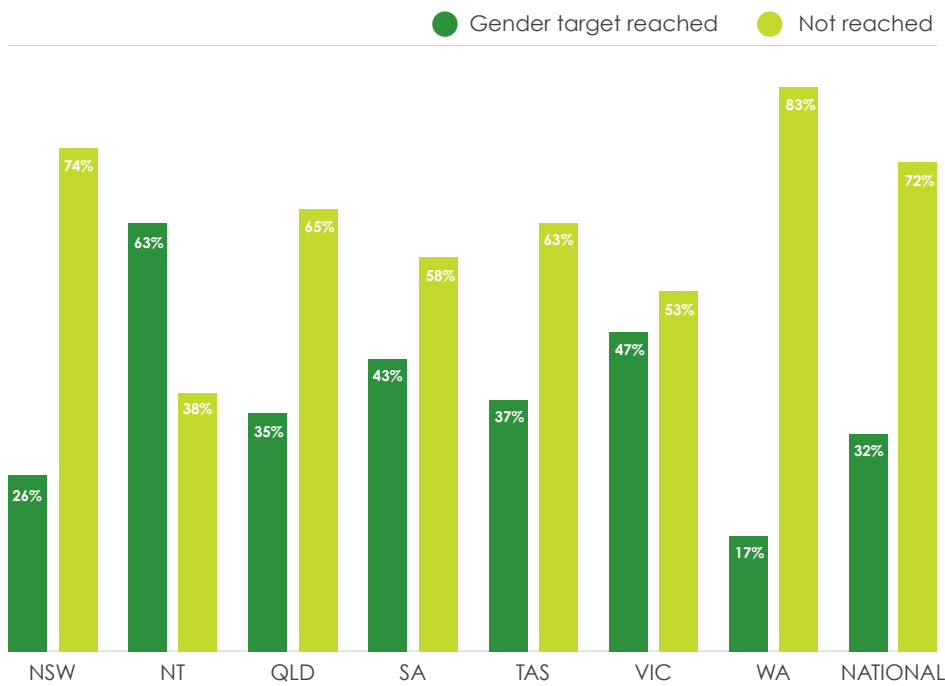


Applying the 40:40:20 Target

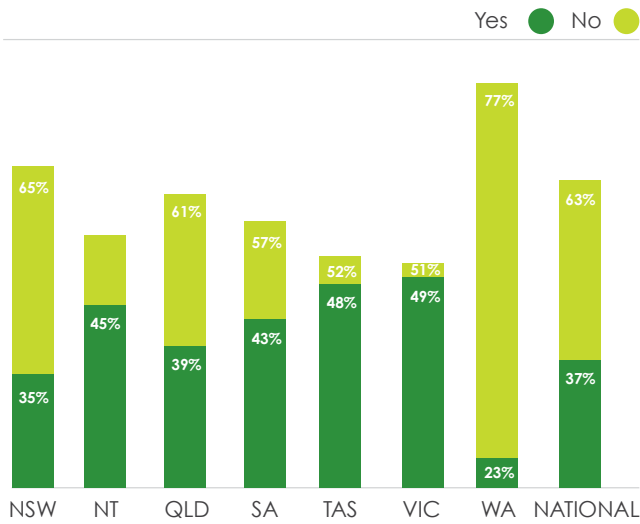
When local governments with four or more executive staff were measured against the gender balance target of 40:40:20, 32 per cent of these were found to meet the goal. The best performing region is the Northern Territory where

63 per cent of local governments meet the target, followed by Victoria at 47 per cent and South Australia at 43 per cent.

Gender target teams 4+ people



Councils exec teams 3 or more meet relevant targets



When both datasets are combined to measure executive leadership teams of three or more and their respective targets (covering 88 per cent of all local governments), the per centage of local governments achieving the overall target improves; 37 per cent of local governments achieved the relevant target relative to their executive leadership team size. There are notable improvements to New South Welsh local government figures with an increase from 26 per cent to 35 per cent under this metric, and an increase from 37 to 48 per cent in Tasmania. The only region where the figure decreases is the Northern Territory.

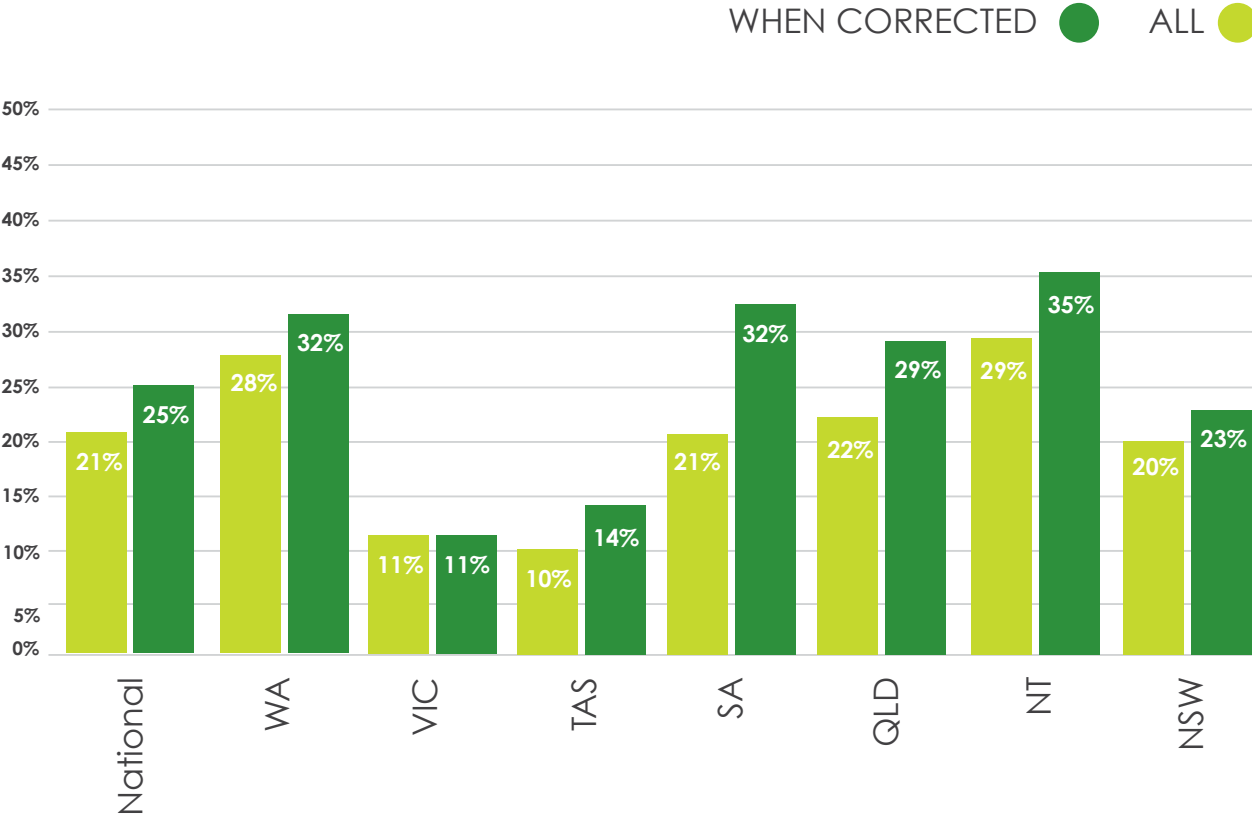
Gender Diversity

25 per cent of local governments have no female representation in their executive leadership team and just under two per cent of local governments have no male representatives. When this figure is corrected to remove CEO-only local governments though, these figures are 21 per cent and 0 per cent respectively. The Northern Territory has the highest per centage of local governments without gender diversity, with 29 per cent of executive teams greater than one having no female representation, closely followed by Western Australia at 28 per cent. Tasmania and Victoria perform best on gender diversity with only 10 and 11 per cent of executive leadership teams greater than one being single-gender teams.

Conclusion

This study provides the baseline data to inform strategy and progress for Australian local governments striving to achieve gender balance in their executive leadership teams by 2025. The results indicate that CEO/GM and Director (or equivalent) positions are predominantly male-occupied, with 21 per cent of local governments in Australia having no female representation in their executive leadership teams. While cases of female overrepresentation in executive leadership teams do exist, these account for only eight per cent of all local governments or five per cent when CEO-only organisations are excluded. The gender balance gap is clear in the data, but there is a pathway to resolution.

% Council with no female representation in exec team



Tools and Resources

Workforce Gender Balance Assessment

To improve gender balance in the workforce, local governments are encouraged to review their gender composition across different roles and levels of their organisations. This baseline of data will help local governments understand where change is needed. It is important to continually collect and report this data to track progress, ensuring the organisation is accountable to the employee body and the community.

A workforce assessment can be conducted in various ways. Local governments may start by gender-disaggregating all workforce data and collecting intersectional data. Intersectional data is separated not just by gender but by attributes such as age, disability, indigenous heritage, ethnicity and race, religion, and sexual orientation. This data, where available, will help local governments understand the impacts of gender inequities that may be compounded by other distinguishing factors of staff.

Relevant workforce data includes the number of people in the workforce across all levels, the number of individuals that applied for positions and were recruited, the number of individuals who received promotions, and the number

of individuals who left the organisation and the reasons they left. Other areas to consider for assessment may include remuneration across different roles and levels of the organisation, policies and practices that contribute to gender balance (such as flexible working arrangements and the number of employees that adopt these arrangements), types of leave available and the number of employees that take them, and workplace culture.

Local governments may further consider conducting interviews and self-assessment with groups of staff to gather additional information and to identify areas requiring focus. These can be critical in uncovering what the workforce sees as key barriers to gender balance from the staff level. This can help in informing any policy or program particular to a given organisation and its demographic mix designed to reach gender balance.

Collectively, the information from this assessment will give an organisation insight into where gender imbalances exist in the organisation and the underlying reasons for this imbalance with a foundation for addressing the problem.

Tools

Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) - Gender Strategy Diagnostic Tool

https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2019_WGEA_GE_Diagnostic_Tool_0.pdf

Victoria State Government, Workplace Gender Audit Guide

While the Gender Audit Guide is commissioned under Victorian state regulation, it provides valuable guidance as a reference for local governments that do not have specific state regulations to follow.

<https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/workplace-gender-auditing>

OurWatch - Workplace Assessment Tool

https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/09/12064935/OurWatch_WER_SelfAssessmentTool_2019_August.pdf

OurWatch - Workplace Gender Equality Indicators

https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/02/18044023/Workplace_Gender_Equality_Indicators_2019.pdf

Further Information

McKinsey & Company - Accelerating gender parity: What can governments do?

<https://www.agec.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2019-01-29-McKinsey-gender-inequality-what-can-governments-do.pdf>

Boston Consulting Group – What’s Working to Drive Gender Diversity in Leadership?

<https://www.agec.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Whats-Working-to-Drive-Gender-Diversity-in-Leadership-2017.pdf>

Recruitment

There are numerous steps that organisations can take to promote gender balance through their recruitment strategies and practices.

Identifying and removing unconscious bias across the entire hiring process is often an important first step in improving hiring practices within an organisation. This may include the creation of gender-neutral job advertisements and advertising in media that are diverse and inclusive of women. When hiring into traditionally male-skewed positions, organisations can seek out recruitment channels that have higher concentrations of women than typical channels, or specifically target women candidates

through women’s forums and networks. This may include professional associations with these existing links like Local Government Professionals State Associations’ women’s networks or Special Interest Groups.

Recruitment managers may need to increase their own awareness and capability through training. Further evidence-based practices that help to reduce unconscious bias include having a diverse and gender-balanced interview panel, structuring interviews around specific job roles rather than ‘a good cultural fit’ or likeability of a candidate, and using work samples to evaluate candidates.

Tools

Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT) - Identify our own implicit biases

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

Gender Decoder – do your job ads contain subtle biases?

<http://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/>

Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) - Gender Equitable Recruitment and Promotion Guide

<https://www.wgea.gov.au/tools/recruitment-and-promotion-guide>

Male Champions of Change - In the Eyes of the Beholders, Avoiding the Merit Trap

<https://championsofchangecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/MCC-CEW-Merit-Paper-FINAL.pdf>

Reducing unconscious bias in the workplace

https://eoc.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/inline-files/Beyond%20First%20Impressions%20-%20Reducing%20unconscious%20bias%20in%20the%20workplace_0.pdf

Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) - Guide to Australian standards on gender-inclusive job evaluation

<https://www.wgea.gov.au/tools/guide-to-australian-standards-on-gender-inclusive-job-evaluation>

Google Training

Microsoft Training

Learn more about your own biases and changing your behaviours. This may be useful for increasing gendered awareness and capability of recruiters and hiring managers

<https://rework.withgoogle.com/subjects/unbiasing/>
<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/diversity/beyond-microsoft/default.aspx>

Additional Resources

International Labour Organisation – Promoting Equity, Gender-Neutral Job evaluation for Equal Pay: A step-by-step guide.

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_122372.pdf

Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) - Gender equitable recruitment and promotion

Summary of varied research on how gender bias operates at work with evidence-based suggestions for creating more equitable recruitment and promotion systems.
<https://www.wgea.gov.au/publications/gender-equitable-recruitment-and-promotion>

Victoria Government – Recruit Smarter

<https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-01/Recruit-Smarter-Technical-Report.pdf>

Promotion and Career Development – Building female leadership

Data shows that local government CEOs/GMs across Australia are 81 per cent male and 19 per cent female, with female representation slightly higher than the Australian all-industry average of 17 per cent. Directors (typically part of the executive leadership team) are on average 67 per cent male and 33 per cent female. Reaching gender balance at this executive leadership team level requires local governments to build robust pipelines of skilled female employees to transition into those leadership positions.

Organisations can support women in their career advancement through initiatives like mentoring and sponsorship. Mentorship generally refers to a relationship between a more experienced mentor and a younger, less experienced mentee. This mentoring relationship helps the mentee to develop their career through emotional support, counselling, and role modelling, also offering the mentee an avenue to discuss professional issues. Sponsorship typically

sees someone in a more senior position actively supporting someone in the development of their career, focusing on career-related support that is more outcome-based.

Women often have smaller professional networks but by broadening professional connections can have greater access to opportunities, be given the opportunity to exchange ideas and increase knowledge, increase their profiles, develop long-lasting relationships, and build confidence.

Other initiatives that can strengthen the female leadership pipeline include secondments in other roles to build experience, graduate programs, apprenticeships and traineeships in traditionally male-dominated fields, and the promotion of female applications for senior positions within the organisation.

Additional Resources

Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) - Supporting Careers through Mentoring and Sponsorship

<https://www.wgea.gov.au/publications/supporting-careers-mentoring-or-sponsorship>
<https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/why-women-need-a-network-of-champions/>

Local Government Professionals NSW – Member Networks

http://www.lgprofessionals.com.au/LG_Professionals_NSW/Membership/Member_Networks/LGProfessionals/Membership/Member_Networks.aspx?hkey=fd586e-248b-4f86-b33f-ea600e5f8a14

LGMA Queensland - Mentoring Program

<https://www.lgmaqlld.org.au/mentoring-programme>

LGMA Queensland - Women in Local Government Village

<https://www.lgmaqlld.org.au/WILG-Village>

Local Government Professionals SA - Women’s Network

<https://www.lgprofessionalssa.org.au/Womens-Network>

Local Government Professionals SA - Women’s Professional Development Program

<https://www.lgprofessionalssa.org.au/Womens-Professional-Development-Program>

Local Government Professionals Tasmania - Special Interest Groups

<https://lgprofessionalstas.org.au/special-interest-groups/>

LG Pro Victoria - Mentoring Program

https://www.lgpro.com/LGPro/Professional%20Development/Programs/Mentoring_Program/LGPro/Professional_Development/Programs/Mentoring/Mentoring_Program.aspx?hkey=e656b278-62ee-4bca-a3a8-14f048aa4071

LG Pro Victoria - Special Interest Groups

https://www.lgpro.com/LGPro/Special_Interest_Groups/LGPro/Special_Interest_Groups/Special_Interest_Groups.aspx?hkey=4c3bacb7-12ed-44ed-bf76-1afb18a426c6

Local Government Professionals WA - Branches and Networks

https://lgprofessionalswa.org.au/Lgmawa/Branches_Networks/Lgmawa/Branches_Networks/Branches_Networks.aspx?hkey=15255e0f-18da-45d8-aaca-fa3cfe740120

Female-focused mentoring programs and support networks in industry

Master Builders Australia - Women Building Australia National Mentoring Program

<https://masterbuilders.com.au/Resources/Career-Centre/Women-Building-Australia>

Trades and Women

<https://tradeswomenaustralia.com.au/>

Women and STEM

<https://www.stemwomen.org.au/resources/education>

Australian Apprenticeships

<https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/>

Workplace Flexibility

Flexible working arrangements enable employees to balance the responsibilities of work and personal life, allowing them to be more effective and efficient in their work. Access to flexible ways of working is also an effective approach to attract and retain talent and increases employee satisfaction and engagement. Embedding these arrangements across an organisation encourages employees

and potential employees with diverse responsibilities and backgrounds to apply for a role. Flexibility means more than just part-time or remote work, however. Men and women, not just working mothers or parents, are interested in some form of flexible work.

Tools

Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) - Developing and Implementing a Workplace Flexibility Strategy

<https://www.wgea.gov.au/flexible-work>

Chiefs for Gender Equity – Government of South Australia Equal Opportunity Commission ‘Work Flex Toolkit’

<https://eoc.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/inline-files/CFGE-Work-Flex-toolkit.pdf>

Fair Work Australia - Workplace Flexibility Online Course

<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/tools-and-resources/online-learning-centre/workplace-flexibility>

Beam – The Flexible Work Playbook, an interactive guide to making flex work

<https://playbook.beamaustralia.com.au/>

Additional Resources

Australian Public Service Commission – Workplace Flexibility, A best practice guide for Australian Public Service Agencies

https://legacy.apsc.gov.au/sites/default/files/workplace_flexibility_a_best_practice_guide_for_australian_public_service_agencies_0.docx

Government of South Australia – Flexibility at work: Information for Managers and Employees

https://www.publicsector.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/214141/August2017Flexibility-at-Work-information-for-Managers-and-Emplo...pdf

Catalyst Report: The Great Debate: Flexibility vs Face Time - Busting the Myths Behind Flexible Work Arrangements

<https://www.catalyst.org/research/the-great-debate-flexibility-vs-face-time-busting-the-myths-behind-flexible-work-arrangements>

Supporting parents and carers

A large proportion of the Australian workforce have care responsibilities, whether they are parents or carers. While women are still more likely to be the main carer for children as well as people with disabilities and older family members, many carers are also male. With support for these parents and carers, employees are able to carry out their work responsibilities without sacrificing time and commitment to their families and other care responsibilities.

Providing support for employees who are parents and carers will benefit organisations by improving employee wellbeing, in turn increasing the organisation's ability to retain workers, improving productivity, and building the positive reputation of the organisation as an employer of choice in the community.

Practical support for parents and carers may include access to flexible working and leave arrangements, regular communications with employees on leave, provision of specialty training and other opportunities, continuous education for all staff about carers, and encouragement for all employees to access the available supports for parents and carers, regardless of gender.

Under Fair Work Australia's National Employment Standards, employees who are parents and carers are entitled to parental leave, carer's leave, the right to request flexible working arrangements, and rights related to parents returning to work. See more at: <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employee-entitlements/national-employment-standards>

Tools

Human Rights Commission - A quick employer guide to supporting working parents

<https://supportingworkingparents.humanrights.gov.au/employers/quick-employer-guide-supporting-working-parents>

Carers Australia

This organisation provides networks and support to carers across Australia including counselling, connecting with other carers, respite care, and online courses.

<https://www.carersaustralia.com.au/about-us/our-member-organisations/>

10 tips for a carer-friendly workplace

<https://carersandemployers.org.au/uploads/main/Carers-Employers-Top-10-Tips.pdf>

Additional Resources

NSW Government - Carers+Employers program

<https://carersandemployers.org.au/>

Improving Workplace Culture

Achieving gender balance will require change. Organisations may experience resistance to such change. Some may welcome opportunities for growth, but others may consider these changes to be damaging or otherwise detrimental to their own career status and the opportunities available to them. A demonstrated commitment to gender equity from senior and executive leadership will be key to driving forward these changes for their positive outcomes.

Leaders need to take into careful consideration the varying responses to change they may encounter and ensure they understand, acknowledge, and address these responses. It is important to continually engage with staff to address

concerns and build support along the way.

Areas that can contribute to improving workplace culture include the language and behaviours that are typical in the workplace. Organisations should actively promote respect for all employees. Beyond having the appropriate policies and procedures in place to handle complaints, it is important to have leadership demonstrating commitment, being transparent through continual communications between staff, and conducting diversity training to increase staff knowledge.

Tools

Diversity Council of Australia - Building inclusion through the power of language

<https://www.dca.org.au/research/project/wordsatwork-building-inclusion-through-power-language>

Australian Public Service Commission – Lexicon of Gender

This is a guide to raise awareness of the gender bias in our current language and the everyday language used around us.

<https://legacy.apsc.gov.au/lexicon-gender>

Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) – Designing Equitable Remuneration Policy

<https://www.wgea.gov.au/tools/designing-equitable-remuneration-policy>

Male Champions of Change - Building a Gender-Balanced and Inclusive Presence

<https://championsofchangecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Test-the-Messages-You-Project.pdf>

Gender-neutral language

<https://www.abc.net.au/education/learn-english/whats-gender-neutral-language-and-why-is-it-important/10879990>

Male Champions of Change – Backlash and Buy-In, Responding to the Challenges in Achieving Gender Inequality

<https://championsofchangecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/MCC-CEW-Backlash-and-Buy-in.pdf>

Additional Resources

How to be an active bystander

<https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/bystander-research-project%20>

OurWatch - Practice guidance: Dealing with backlash

<https://workplace.ourwatch.org.au/resource/practice-guidance-dealing-with-backlash/>

Harvard Kennedy School – Women and Public Policy Program – Ten Evidence-Based Practices for De-Biasing the Workplace

https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/iris_bohnet/files/ten_evidence-based_practices_for_de-biasing_the_workplace_final.pdf

University of Massachusetts Amherst - Center for Employer Equity

<https://www.umass.edu/employmentequity/what-works-evidence-based-ideas-increase-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-workplace>

Case Studies

City of Casey, Victoria

The City of Casey in Victoria is located 35 kilometres south east of Melbourne's CBD, covering 410 square kilometres. Casey is one of the fastest growing cities in Australia and has more residents than any other Victorian municipality with a population of over 350,000 and a workforce of over 1,800, 70 per cent of which is female. The City of Casey has a young, culturally diverse community, with nearly 40 per cent of residents born overseas and a high proportion of under 18s. Casey is currently achieving the Gender Balance target in their executive team.

The City of Casey has had a longstanding commitment to promoting gender equality and preventing family violence. Key learnings from their work in this space, together with evidence linking gender inequality and family violence, has led to bold and innovative Gender Equality and Family Violence Prevention Strategies and Action Plans. The City were the first amongst a small number of Councils to begin to address the issue from 2004. Since this time, a number of initiatives have progressed for gender equality and to prevent violence against women.

The Plan

The City launched a Gender Equity Action Plan in 2018 which will operate until the end of 2021. The Plan has focused on advancing gender equity within the organisation and in the design and delivery of the council's services and programs. The priority areas for the Plan have been to ensure diverse women are actively engaged in council leadership and decision-making, that the council has a workplace culture and structure that promotes gender equality and challenges discrimination, and to ensure gender equity is integrated in existing policies, plans, programs, services, and infrastructure.

An influencing factor in developing the Plan was the 2015 Victorian Royal Commission on Family and Community Violence against Women which put an emphasis on the safety of women both in the community and in the City's workforce. Initial activities focused on external community service gender equality and prevention programs, and now there is also priority for Casey's workforce. This commitment is illustrated through the creation of two part time staff roles to specifically support gender: Domestic Violence Prevention Officer and Gender Equality Officer.

Champions for Change

The City of Casey runs a 'Champions for Change' program where they recruit and train volunteers from across all levels and sections of their workforce to champion gender equity, diversity, and safe workplaces. The City started with a small cohort of 14 people through a funded program, but it has now expanded to have 60 Champions including women and men from administrative through to executive roles. Champions are trained in gender equality to be 'active bystanders' who call out sexist behaviour and to support those experiencing family violence. Champions have quarterly meetings across the organisation, can participate in gender-related projects including events, contribute to action plans and strategies, and are being harnessed to support the new Gender Equality Act.

Progress is being made at the City with discussions of gender becoming more commonplace and staff more regularly consulting Gender Equality and Family Violence Officers to apply a 'gender lens' to programs, policies and workforce planning. An example of this is the gender analysis tool that was developed for the COVID 19 pandemic response. These officers have been supported by the City's executive through fortnightly meetings with the executive leadership team to discuss gender-related workplace issues while these are highlighted in staff communications. Considering gender in work practices and outcomes is becoming normalised within the council. Other areas that Casey is looking at include creating pathways for female staff through mentoring opportunities and making leadership positions more equal and accessible.



City of Casey's Champions for Change



200 staff members taking part in a reflection for City of Casey's 'Respect Women: Call it Out' campaign

Reporting

In February 2020, the Victorian State Government passed the Gender Equality Bill and established the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector.

This required– all Victorian local governments to report gender data and progress on gender equality to the Commission from the next financial year. The Commission provides support to local government through resources, templates and guidelines on their website and information sessions in roadshows.

The City of Casey is preparing to collect more robust data on gender in its workforce in April and May of 2021 for its first report to the Commission with a particular focus on the management pipeline and in the gender diversity traditionally male- and female-dominated roles. As part of the report, the City will Part of this will consider gender responsive budgeting, gender impact assessments for all new programs and policies and hiring external consultants to audit the City's progress in gender equality Once completed, the City will have a more comprehensive picture of gender in the workplace, will review its 2018-2021 Plan, and develop a more informed Gender Equality and Family Violence Prevention Strategy and Action Plan.

City of Vincent, Western Australia

The City of Vincent is one of Perth's most densely populated and multicultural localities with almost 40,000 residents. It maintains a broadly balanced workforce that is 53 per cent female to 47 per cent male and is working towards gender balance in its executive team. Its journey towards gender balance in leadership has been influenced by its community and the selection and direction of elected members, while organisational policies and systems, through strategic support from the executive leadership team, has assisted in the City's journey toward facilitating gender diversity.

Both the elected Council and the local government workforce have become more diverse over the past decade, which reflects Vincent attracting younger generations who place a high priority on diversity and inclusion. The City's community has wanted a progressive local government which reflects its diversity and values including gender equity, LGBTQ+ inclusivity, indigenous reconciliation, and support for multicultural interests. The City's senior executive team has championed diversity and the empowerment of women in leadership positions within their workforce.

David MacLennan joined the City of Vincent as CEO in 2018 and is a champion for gender equity. One of his first initiatives as CEO was to expand the Executive Management Committee which ensured a better gender balance in the key decision-making forum impacting the organisation. A three-month rotating staff member position was also created to enable senior male and female staff members to participate in executive management decision making. This provides professional development opportunities for management staff seeking to develop their career and contribute to whole of organisation initiatives.

The Pipeline

The City of Vincent aims to attain and maintain gender balance in its senior management team through a management pipeline that balances incoming female and male managers. This pipeline currently includes 44 per cent female managers and 62 per cent female team leaders. The City actively encourages female staff to act in these roles to build their confidence and experience in management while encouraging them to apply for promotions and career opportunities.



City of Vincent CEO, David MacLennan with Nyoongar Outreach Services CEO, Maria McAttackney

Mentoring

Providing this support and encouragement to female staff is an important element of the City's strategy particularly for women who may be more reluctant to apply for promotions and opportunities than men. Staff are now also invited to take part in a mentoring group involving five Perth inner city local governments as both as mentors and mentees. The group supports and encourages female emerging leaders.

The City is pushing toward achieving true gender balance in leadership into the future through executive leadership that provides encouragement and opportunities for women and develops an inclusive and diverse workforce.

Isaac Regional Council, Queensland

Isaac Regional Council serves a permanent population of almost 21,000 across 58,708 square kilometres of Queensland’s central coast where the region’s largest employer, the resource sector, influences the size and diversity of the community. While 48 per cent of the local government’s 463 full time workforce equivalent are female, the executive leadership team is currently all male, but the organisation is actively working to change this. A growing pipeline of female managers and team leaders and is setting the foundation for a future senior leadership team with greater gender diversity. This includes having female managers and team leaders working in traditionally male-dominated areas of operation including parks and recreation, infrastructure, and waste management.

Isaac Regional Council is led by a female Mayor and female-majority Council including six females and two male elected members. Many of these were elected unopposed at the last election, and the local government credits this stability with bringing the stability required to implement its gender framework.

Top-Down Change

Isaac Regional Council’s CEO, Gary Stevenson, decided to tackle the issue of male dominance at the top three tiers of management at the organisation in 2016 when the male-skewed gender imbalance in managerial roles contrasted with a female-dominated Council. Staff were consulted about the issues that were preventing women within the organisation being employed at managerial and executive levels, resulting in a five-year plan with actions on diversity, gender balance, and equal opportunity in the workplace.

This included the formation of a Women in Local Government Working Group tasked with implementing recommendations from ALGWA’s 2004 National Framework for Women in Local Government.

The Working Group consisted of 11 female staff from various areas of the business and levels of seniority tasked with reviewing the organisation’s principles and practices relating to gender balance, conducting research and making recommendations on internal initiatives that could contribute to gender balance, and reporting to Council on addressing gender balance in senior management. The group undertook staff surveys to identify barriers and opportunities and conducted interviews with around 100 staff members to see how these could



Women in Isaac Regional Council’s outdoor workforce

be addressed. Their findings were compiled in a report with 13 recommendations which were subsequently approved by Council. The Working Group soon became an Advisory Committee that set about implementing the recommendations and as of April 2021 all but one of these recommendations have been completed, with the final objective on track for completion in coming months.

Flexible Workplaces

Some of these changes have been to policy to build better flexibility for all staff in the workplace. Many of these flexible workplace policies were addressed and tested during the COVID-19 pandemic which itself helped in achieving some of the organisation’s flexibility targets.

These included the development of a policy around breastfeeding in the workplace, one for children in the workplace, and giving women assurances that their positions would be retained on return from maternity leave. The introduction of these policies gave staff the confidence to take leave for family reasons, feeling they would be supported when they returned to work. The organisation has since been able to retain more staff returning to the workplace after having children and has built a more harmonious culture and space for women to return to work.

The Interview Process

Isaac Regional Council has found that many more men apply for positions during recruitment phases than women, even though at times women were found to be stronger candidates. In response, the Council undertook a review of position descriptions throughout the organisation to ensure they were gender neutral while a gender bias evaluation of recruitment processes was conducted. The HR team decided to include more information about the benefits and opportunities related to flexibility in the workplace on job descriptions for advertised roles. This meant that interviewees, particularly women, did not have to ask for that information during the interview where there may be a perception that asking about flexible work would negatively impact the prospects of an applicant in the selection process. Feedback from applicants confirmed they felt more informed on positions and confident going into interviews. These flexible opportunities were extended to male staff with the assurance of parental leave being available to new fathers.

The organisation reports that it currently has a healthy gender balance across the organisation with a mix of male and female staff in traditionally male-dominated roles including those in the engineering and outdoor workforce.

This has been demonstrated outwardly to the community through the men and women working for the Council in field worker roles. While the prominent resources sector poses challenges for retaining staff as a competitive employer, it also attracts highly skilled and gender diverse staff to the region, particularly in STEM areas, as the resources sector has done a lot of work itself in improving gender balance. This has had flow on effects for the organisation in terms of its ability to employ women with engineering, trade, and outdoor workforce experience.

Future Pipeline

Looking into the future, the organisation has just recruited a new CEO, Jeff Stewart Harris as an internal promotion in the wake of the upcoming retirement of Gary Stevenson. The incoming CEO has been leading the cultural leadership program at the organisation which over one third of staff have completed, ensuring that leadership pathways are being established. The Council is confident that the incoming Chief Executive will build on the organisation’s positive culture and develop greater opportunities for its diverse workforce under strong, inclusive leadership. The Council is now looking to improve workforce planning which was delayed by the pandemic- with a particular focus on developing existing staff and creating a secure management pipeline into the future.



Senior Water Operator Marie Jones and Water and Wastewater Operator Anthony Weller

Snowy Valleys Council, New South Wales

Snowy Valleys Council is a rural local government covering 8,960 square kilometres of the western slopes of New South Wales’ Snowy Mountains with a population of 14,395. Of the government’s 270 strong workforce, 44 per cent are women, 47 per cent of whom work at manager level or above. The organisation is currently achieving gender balance in its executive team with two female and two male staff on the executive, led by a male CEO.

Snowy Valleys Council is also headed by a gender balanced Council with five male and four female elected members, though has a broader history of diverse leadership. This has included a strong female indigenous leader as Mayor and community leaders across various roles and groups including the ‘Local Leading Ladies’ group whose members still contain many diverse female representatives from across the community. Local woman Natalie Randall was acknowledged with a Regional Women’s Award recently for her work as President of the Tumut Regional Chamber of Commerce and her contribution to bushfire recovery in the region.

Community Representation

Having gender balance within both the elected body and the senior management team is reflective of the Snowy Valleys community promoting a visible culture of diversity and gender equity. The Council’s senior management works closely with community groups and fosters open conversations within the community which influences the way the organisation operates. Gender equity has been part of the Council’s community strategic plan in the consideration of gender and diversity as a resourcing opportunity rather something achieved through targeted projects or strategies.

The Gender Divide

Staff at Snowy Valleys Council are still typically grouped into traditionally gendered roles, however. 95 per cent of children’s services staff are women, for example, while 90 per cent of outdoor workers from roads and bridges to parks and gardens are male. To challenge this trend, Snowy Valleys is working to encourage women to enter non-traditional roles. The organisation is actively promoting its entry



A Snowy Valleys Council trainee project manager and her supervisor in the field

level apprenticeship, traineeship, and cadetship programs to attract more young females to enter its workforce. It has recently engaged a female trainee project manager who is working under the supervision of a female project officer (pictured) as part of this effort, and the partnership is already benefiting both the staff and Council. Such showcasing of women working in non-traditional roles such as those in the outdoor workforce is a continuing development in the organisation’s effort to improve its gender balance across the workforce.

Snowy Valleys Council is also supporting this diversity at the elected level. The Council, alongside LGNSW, is supporting a series of community information sessions to encourage more women and younger people to stand for New South Wales’ upcoming local government elections.

Having a ‘Board’ that is diverse influences the way senior management is structured and the decision-making process, and the Council sees encouraging diverse people to stand for election as beneficial to both the organisation and

community. The Council also aims to represent its diverse community which includes a strong indigenous population.

Organisational Culture

Snowy Valleys Council has been working towards creating an organisational culture based on dignity and respect by developing a workplace where employees have a safe and healthy work environment, free from discrimination, bullying, harassment, or violence and where they are treated with dignity and respect. This culture has a focus on gender equity, flexible work, and the development of a positive workplace. The senior management team is made up of progressive professionals who view flexibility, innovation, and inclusiveness a given in any contemporary workplace, and in this way the organisational culture has developed naturally and flexibly.

Flexibility

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a more flexible workplace for Snowy Valleys Council, with staff moving into flexible work arrangements that have endured with the requisite support of the organisation. Staff were rewarded after a difficult 2020- including its 2019/20 bushfires and pandemic response- with a two-week Christmas shutdown to recognise the time staff needed with their families and friends, with further flexibility in late January for staff with children starting school. These flexible workplace practices have helped provide a work environment that supports female staff particularly to develop and balance their careers.

City of Charles Sturt, South Australia

The City of Charles Sturt is a large metropolitan local government based in the western suburbs of Adelaide with a multicultural population of over 110,000 people representing over 100 cultural groups. 45 per cent of the City's 522 employees are female and the senior management team is well represented by women and men. The executive leadership team is achieving the gender balance target of 40:40:20 and for several years has had an equal split between men and women in leadership positions. The City's former long-term female CEO was a strong role model for female staff and the City has since seen a stronger representation of females in senior roles. The City has a female Mayor and is supported by an executive team led by a progressive male CEO, supportive of women in leadership and greater diversity in the workforce.

The General Manager of Corporate Services, Donna Dunbar, has worked at the City of Charles Sturt for 40 years since entering the organisation in a clerical position. When Donna started, no women were working in leadership or managerial positions, with all team leader roles filled by male staff. She has had the unique opportunity of seeing the organisation work towards gender balance and began seeing this shift in the late 1990s when more training and professional development opportunities were made available to female staff.

Flexible Work

The introduction of flexible work has strengthened women's ability and confidence to take on senior positions, and the City is supportive of part-time and flexible hours in senior roles. Not reserved for senior management alone, many teams in the greater workforce balance their FTE staff with multiple part-time staff positions to cater to those with family and personal obligations.

With COVID-related restrictions necessitating a move to more flexible working conditions, the City has since decided to maintain these flexible arrangements in its entire workforce, providing staff members with a platform for input into how they work. Many female staff members have decided to maintain a mixed schedule of work-from-home and in-office work which saves on commuting time and allows a better balance of home duties, for example. Flexible work in terms of starting hours and days has also been introduced for field or outdoor workers to be inclusive of non-office workers as well.



Challenging Gender Roles

Staff roles at the City tend to be gendered, and this is something the City is actively challenging. A greater percentage of female staff work in library and community service roles, while more male staff work in outdoor and technical roles, for example. The City has an ageing, predominantly male workforce, with a large proportion of the outdoor workforce being males of 55 or older. The City has taken this as an opportunity to encourage more younger females to enter the workforce in such non-traditional positions. The City is actively engaging with local high schools to encourage girls to consider an entry level career in local government outdoor or 'field' roles to both encourage women to enter these non-traditional roles while also replenishing an ageing workforce.

Senior management is also affected by these traditional imbalances, with Corporate Services being led by a female leader with all female managers and Asset Management Services being led by a male leader with an all-male team. Career pathways have generally seen senior staff moving up the 'chain' in their own division or portfolio, leading gender imbalances within divisions. To challenge this trend, the executive leadership team has managers take on secondments or acting roles in other divisions within the local government. With the role of Manager of Field Services being historically filled by males and the current manager being on leave, the City has taken the opportunity to temporarily fill the position with a female manager from the Corporate Services team with an IT background so that they can broaden their expertise in another technical area.

Career Pathways

Not only focused on senior leadership though, the City has also focused on supporting the broader workforce through upskilling and the provision of career pathways to managerial positions. This support has included the building of a healthy workplace culture and of resilience in staff themselves. With the City making positive gains for gender

balance in its workforce right up to its leadership teams so far, it is now looking at fostering greater diversity in cultural and disability representation to have a workforce that more accurately reflects its community.



