

BULOKE SHIRE COUNCIL

GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN



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SHIRE COUNCIL

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Buloke Shire Council acknowledges the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk Nations and the Dja Dja Wurrung people as the traditional owners of parts of the land now known as Buloke. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and value their ongoing contribution to our heritage and our community.

Buloke has significant number cultural heritage places including an Aboriginal historical place, burials, artefact scatters, earth features, low density artefact distributions, scarred trees and a stone feature.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The *Gender Equality Act 2020* (the Act) requires all Local Government Authorities to develop a Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) every four years. A GEAP helps Council plan, implement and measure change.

Under section 46 (4) of the Local Government Act 2020, the Chief Executive Officer also has obligations to develop and maintain a Workforce Plan.



LONG-TERM COMMUNITY VISION AND COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025

Prepared with extensive community input, our Long-Term Community Vision is:

Building a Better Buloke – A healthy, connected, inclusive and prosperous community.

The Council Plan 2021-25 outlines 4 strategic priorities:

OUR BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

OUR COMMUNITY WELLBEING

OUR ECONOMY

OUR COUNCIL AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



It is with great pleasure I present to you Buloke Shire Council's Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-2025.

As a signatory to the Local Government Women's Charter, Council is proud of its public commitment to gender equity and inclusiveness.

Council and its officers are dedicated to promoting gender equality in the workplace, consider promoting gender equality when developing policies and programs and in delivering services to our community.

We promote and demonstrate ourselves as an employer of choice, offering roles that are not gender specific.

We have made some significant progress towards gender equity in the workplace and this Action Plan will ensure our continued improvement.

The GEAP includes the measures Council proposes to take to ensure gender equality is not a conceptual aspiration, but a reality inherent in all actions and proposed actions, whether through strategic initiatives or business-as-usual activities.

Buloke Shire Council is committed to leading the way in prevention of violence against women and minority groups and gender equality.

The GEAP strongly aligns with our Workforce Plan 2021-2025. Underpinning this effort are Council's Values:

- Good communication
- Transparency in decision making
- Accountability for actions
- Working collaboratively with partners
- Taking responsibility
- Being responsive and timely

Wayne O'Toole
Chief Executive Officer



GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN

The following gender equality principles in the Victorian Gender Equality Act 2020, Part One (section 6) have guided the preparation of the Buloke Shire Council Gender Equality Action Plan:

1. All Victorians should live in a safe and equal society, have access to equal power, resources and opportunities and be treated with dignity, respect and fairness.
2. Gender equality benefits all Victorians regardless of gender.
3. Gender equality is a human right and precondition to social justice.
4. Gender equality brings significant economic, social and health benefits for Victoria.
5. Gender equality is a precondition for the prevention of family violence and other forms of violence against women and girls.
6. Advancing gender equality is a shared responsibility across the Victorian community.
7. All human beings, regardless of gender, should be free to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives without being limited by gender stereotypes, gender roles or prejudices.
8. Gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience on the basis of Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and other attributes.
9. Women have historically experienced discrimination and disadvantage on the basis of sex and gender.
10. Special measures may be necessary to achieve gender equality.



The gender equality principles are also supported by the follow workplace gender indicators:

- Gender composition at all levels of the workforce
- Gender composition of governing bodies
- Equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value
- Sexual harassment in the workplace
- Recruitment and promotion practises
- Gendered segregation within the workplace
- Availability of leave and flexible working arrangements.

Council's vision is for a whole of organisation approach to embed gender equality principles in the culture across all functions of Council in a viable and meaningful way.





I am happy about my future at this organisation.

PEOPLE WHO IDENTIFY AS FEMALE DEMONSTRATED A SATISFACTION LEVEL OF
72%

Of staff in positions of Team Leader and above:

53%
IDENTIFY AS FEMALE

CONSULTATION

As part of the consultation process for the compilation of the GEAP, Council staff were invited to undertake the People Matter Survey for Local Government in mid-2021.

Respondents were asked how they experience different aspects of our workplace, including gender equality, diversity and inclusion and cultural safety. The objective of this survey was to support staff and improve our workplace and culture. It was also designed to inform an action plan to strengthen what we are doing well and focus on improvements to promote gender equality.

Council conducts quarterly Staff Satisfaction Surveys to measure satisfaction on a range of categories including, communication, recognition, development as well as gender equality.

Results from the most recent Staff Satisfaction Survey (conducted December 2021) in relation to the statement:

Council has a comprehensive plan to develop an effective gender equality action plan.

Saw respondents who identify as female demonstrate a satisfaction level of 65.5%. Overall satisfaction to this statement was 64.5%. This suggests that females employed by Council a slightly more comfortable with Council's planning in relation to gender equality.

In relation to the statement:

I am happy about my future at this organisation.

Respondents who identify as female demonstrated a satisfaction level of 72%. Overall satisfaction to this statement was 65.5%. This result suggest that female staff overall are more optimistic about their future with Council than other demographics.

A Gender Equality Action Plan Working Group was set up as part of delivering the Gender Equality Act 2020 requirements that included Council's Senior Leadership Team and Manager Human Resources.

In addition to staff surveying to specifically inform the GEAP, Councillors, Council staff (including Union Representatives and OHS Representatives) as well as the Staff Consultative Committee members were consulted during the compilation of the GEAP. Over 60 suggestions were made during consultation on the Draft GEAP alone when presented in early 2022.

BASELINE AUDIT ANALYSIS

As an organisation, Council employs 164 people across full time, part time and casual roles.

Council's Gender Audit, reported to the Commissioner for Gender Equality on 1 December 2021, identified the gender make up of our organisation as having a female staffing rate of 41.4%. In comparison to females making up 49.4% of the Buloke population (2016 Census).

There is a gap in Council's workforce when lined up with the gender make up of its community.

There is a good balance of female representation in the first three tiers below the CEO of Council's Organisational Structure. Of staff in positions of Team Leader and above 53% are female.

The gap in Council's workforce exists below these levels with Officer and Outdoor Workers showing a staffing level of people who identify as female of 40%.

There is also a gap in the Governing Body (Council) with just 2 females of the 7 Councillors elected in 2020. This represents 29% female representation.

Conversely, a female Councillor has been elected Mayor in two of the last 4 Mayoral Elections (50%).

GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2021-2025

Definitions:

CEO Office: CEO | Community Development: CD | Corporate Services: CS | Works and Technical Services: WTS | Senior Leadership Team: SLT | Gender Equality Action Plan Working Group: GEAPWG

Indicator	Objective	Strategy	Who	When
Gender composition at all levels of the workforce	Appropriate use of inclusive language and images	Ensure language and images in all internal and external documents and communications follow inclusive language guidelines.	CEO CD CS WTS GEAPWG	2022 Ongoing
	Achieve workforce equality	Strive to achieve and maintain equality targets for leadership positions through to officer positions.		
	Enable and support women and people of diverse genders in leadership roles	<p>Consider gender equality, diversity and inclusion implications and costs in the Annual Budget process.</p> <p>Establish formal and informal mentoring programs and opportunities to assist women in releasing their potential in the organisation.</p> <p>Provide equitable opportunities for women to be involved in internal and external committees and networks.</p> <p>Invest in leadership opportunities which will drive change.</p> <p>Investigate options for increasing gender and intersectional balance across the leadership and management cohort, including in Committees and Working Groups where appropriate to raise visibility of women and LGBTIQ+ communities.</p>		
	Implement gender equality practices across the organisation	<p>Provide flexible work arrangements at all levels of employment to encourage more women and others into the organisation.</p> <p>Ensure appropriate leave is available in relation to caring commitments or family violence.</p>	CEO SLT	
	Gender impact assessments	<p>Establish, train and continue to complete gender impact assessments on policies, programs and services.</p> <p>Ensure employee engagement/culture surveys allow for meaningful consultation that includes matters of inclusion, gender diversity and safety at work.</p>	CEO SLT CD CS WTS	

Indicator	Objective	Strategy	Who	When
Gender composition of governing bodies	Leadership commitment to gender equality	Promote the role of Mayor and CEO as champions for gender equality in achieving Council's vision and commitment to gender equality.	CEO	2022 Ongoing
		Provide resources and training to prospective female and gender diverse Councillors and promote the benefits to the community of Council representation.	CEO SLT	
Equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value	Remove gender pay gap	Review remuneration policy and include objective criteria for allocating benefits, with all remuneration linked to objective performance measures that are irrespective of gender.	CEO CS	2024
		Examine how the Enterprise Agreement can ensure greater workplace equity and flexibility.		2022-23
Sexual harassment in the workplace	Maintain and advance a workplace free from sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination	<p>Develop a culture that supports reinforcement of messaging from CEO and SLT on a zero-tolerance approach to harassment, discrimination, unfair treatment, and sexism.</p> <p>Ensure a clear process to report unwanted or offensive behavior and this process is known and communicated.</p> <p>Partake in events such as "16 Days of Activism" and have activities and events for informal learning which build awareness of gender equality and intersectional learning.</p> <p>Ensure access to appropriate facilities and to uniforms that are based on needs, that don't make staff feel disrespected.</p>	CEO SLT	2022 Ongoing

Indicator	Objective	Strategy	Who	When
Recruitment and promotion practises	Increase attraction, recruitment and retention of women and diverse genders	<p>Strive for gender and intersectional balance composition of employees of different ages, including older women, joining the organisation.</p> <p>Use gender neutral job recruitment collateral including selection criteria and structured interviews that include the provision of blind resumes to interview panelists. Ensure the utilisation of gender-balanced interview panels.</p>	CEO CS SLT	2024
	Strive to increase internal promotion of women	<p>Challenge traditional views of merit in recruitment, promotion assessment and evaluation.</p> <p>Provide mentoring and support programs for women seeking promotion.</p> <p>Provide the same benefits, training and promotional opportunities to all genders as well as flexible work and leave arrangements.</p>		2022 Ongoing
Gendered segregation within the workplace	Increase gender and intersectionality awareness and support	<p>Ensure the working environment is inclusive of gender and intersectionality needs and provide appropriate support to new and existing staff.</p> <p>Promote the use of and benefits of pronouns in digital signatures. Ensure the appropriate use of gender neutral and inclusive language and diverse images on all communication.</p>	CEO CS CEO CD	2022 Ongoing
Availability of leave and flexible working arrangements	Provide support for parental leave, family violence leave and carers leave regardless of gender	<p>Ensure employees on flexible work arrangements have access to meaningful and quality work, benefits and training opportunities.</p> <p>Support carers to return to work after parental leave with minimal disruption to their career progress.</p> <p>Promote flexible working arrangement options.</p> <p>Clearly communicate with all employees what their leave entitlements are, and what is available to them.</p>	CEO CS SLT	2022 Ongoing



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