

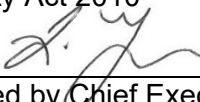
# LODDON SHIRE COUNCIL

## GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2021-2025



LODDON  
SHIRE

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

**Loddon Shire Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land comprising the Loddon Shire Council area. Council would like to pay respect to their Elders both past and present.**

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## 1 PURPOSE

Loddon Shire Council's (Council) Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) 2021-2025 (The Action Plan) seeks to clearly plan, implement and measure change in order to achieve workplace gender equality. The GEAP includes results of a workplace gender audit completed in 2021 in order to gain valuable information to assess the current state of gender equality in the workplace, and strategies and measures to improve gender equality at Council.

The Action Plan contains actions relating to all seven indicators, which include:

- gender composition of the workforce
- gender composition of the governing body
- pay equity
- sexual harassment
- recruitment and selection
- leave and flexibility
- gendered segregation

## 2 BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The Action Plan includes seven objectives underpinned with twenty corresponding actions. All actions identified will be completed using existing resources and will not require any additional funding.

## 3 RISK ANALYSIS

There is no immediate risk to Council regarding compliance with the Gender Equality Act 2020, which will be reached through submission of this document to the Commission.

As all actions rely on the current workforce and not on external funding, the risk to Council is low and can be limited to competing priorities of responsible officers impacting on ability to achieve the actions by the set timelines.

## 4 BACKGROUND

The Gender Equality Act 2020 requires each Council to address its obligations to promote gender equality in the workplace, consider gender equality when developing policies and programs and delivering services to the public. Loddon Shire Council will achieve this through delivering on the Gender Equality Action Plan and the Workforce Plan and the promotion of, conducting gender audits and impact assessments, and reporting progress to the Gender Equality Commission every two years.

Under section 46 (4) of the Local Government Act 2020, the Chief Executive Officer also has obligations to develop and maintain a Workforce Plan. The Workforce Plan reflects Council's commitment to ensuring legislative compliance in all employment practices, and works in tandem with The Action Plan. The key focus areas for 2021/2022 of The Workforce Plan include:

- implementing the requirements of the Gender Equality Act 2020
- engaging in the development and implementation of a fitness for work policy
- considering whether staff satisfaction can be reported at a department level whilst maintaining confidentiality
- conducting service delivery reviews.

Both the Workforce Plan and the Gender Equality Action Plan will ensure a safer and more inclusive working environment for those of all genders and identities, who have a disability, and

who are from culturally diverse communities. Loddon Shire Council is committed to achieving the actions in both plans.

## 5 OBJECTIVES OF THE GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN

Council has achieved positive progress in the area of gender equality since the successful implementation of its first Gender Equality Action Plan in 2018.

Notable achievements include:

- having active membership in the Loddon Family Violence Network and the regional Collective Action for Respect and Equality Partnership
- participates and promotes the annual 16 Days of Activism campaign against gender-based violence
- has allocated a dedicated member of its Policy Review Group to ensure all policies, procedures and strategic documents are reviewed with a gendered lens.

Gender equality and the effort toward is underpinned by Council's values of leadership, respect, integrity, accountability and impartiality.

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

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

These principles are supported by the workplace gender equality indicators of:

- gender composition of the workforce
- gender composition of the governing body
- pay equity
- sexual harassment
- recruitment and promotion
- leave and flexibility
- gendered segregation

Council aims to deliver an integrated and sustainable approach that sees gender equality principles and intersectional factors imbedded into culture across all business practices by 2025.

## 6 INDICATOR 1: GENDER COMPOSITION OF THE WORKFORCE

Total gender composition of workforce in 20/21 year (all staff who were employed in said year), as reported in Workplace Gender Equality Audit (WGEA):

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	102	47%
Female	115	53%
Self-described	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>100%</b>

Gender composition of workforce in 20/21 year by employment basis:

Employment type	Number of employees	Percentage
Male full-time ongoing	72	33%
Male full-time fixed-term	17	8%
Male part-time ongoing	9	4%
Male part-time fixed-term	1	0.5%
Male - casual	3	1%
Female full-time ongoing	24	11%
Female full-time fixed-term	12	6%
Female part-time ongoing	50	23%
Female part-time fixed-term	4	2%
Female - casual	25	11.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>100%</b>

These tables indicate that whilst there is a higher amount of females than males employed by Council, more females work part-time, and/or are in fixed-term or casual positions.

A reason as to why there is a higher percentage of females employed in part-time or casual work, or choose fixed-term opportunities may be relating to family status (such as caring responsibilities for children) however Council does not gather data to confirm this assumption.

Further, the WGEA identified Council has significant data reporting gaps in relation to identifying Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status, cultural identity status, religious status, disability status, sexual orientation and any self-described gender other than male or female.

The People Matter Survey reiterated the importance of improving Council's data reporting, as results indicated there may be members of the workforce who identify as a gender other than male or female, have a disability, have a sexual orientation other than straight, speak a language other than English at home and have a cultural identity other than Australian.

The People Matter Survey also indicated the following data when respondents were asked 'is there a positive culture within my organisation in relation to employees of different sexes/genders'?

Response	Loddon	Local Council Overall
Strongly disagree	0%	1%
Disagree	3%	5%
Neither agree nor disagree	16%	15%
Agree	52%	53%
Strongly agree	26%	23%
Don't know	2%	3%

The results are encouraging in that Council is below the average in terms of respondents strongly disagreeing or disagreeing with the statement, however is slightly below the local government average of respondents agreeing with the statement.

### 6.1 Actions relating to this indicator:

Action	Responsible Officer	Reasoning	Indicator of Success (Outcome)	Resources	Timing
Develop surveys to capture data on why employees applied for positions	Human Resources Coordinator	To better understand driver behind employees, or potential employees, choosing fixed-term, part-time or casual employment	Data obtained	Existing	June 2023
Develop new personnel information forms to include additional fields to address data gaps	Human Resources Coordinator	To obtain more accurate data regarding workforce demographics to ensure a safe, inclusive and accessible culture for all and to address gaps in information.	90% of personnel information forms are returned; data collated.	Existing	December 2022
Creation of 'Gender Equality Champion' at leadership level	Human Resources Coordinator; Loddon Leaders	Promote gender equality messaging from those in positions of power to encourage a collaborative approach to achieving gender equality	Appoint a member of the Loddon Leaders to work with Human Resources Coordinator in promoting gender equality	Existing	December 2024

Action	Responsible Officer	Reasoning	Indicator of Success (Outcome)	Resources	Timing
Development of culture in line with gender equality	All staff	Embedding gender equality into culture to ensure a safe working environment for all	Staff feel comfortable to be their true self; measured through satisfaction surveys	Existing	June 2025
Investigation and promotion of childcare options to provide further support for staff	Human Resources Coordinator	Providing further support for staff to reduce turnover	Utilisation by staff of local childcare options	Existing	March 2025
Spotlight the experiences of women leaders, particularly those from culturally and linguistically diverse groups	Human Resources Coordinator	Encouragement for women to consider leadership opportunities	Profiles developed and disseminated of women leaders	Existing	November 2023
Facilitate professional development for leadership in key Gender Equality (GE) areas	Learning and Development Officer	Development of knowledge and skills relating to gender equality	80% of the leadership group having completed selected program.	Existing	November 2022
Establish a GE Working Group (GEWG) including representation from senior leadership to provide a mechanism for internal discussions and reflections relating to gender equity and workplace experiences	Manager Organisation Development	Discussion from diverse representatives to encourage different ideas to promote gender equality	Terms of Reference developed	Existing	April 2023



Action	Responsible Officer	Reasoning	Indicator of Success (Outcome)	Resources	Timing
Develop a GE and diversity page on Council's intranet and link to the staff induction portal	Human Resources Coordinator	Central location for resources relating to gender equality and diversity	GE and diversity intranet page developed	Existing	June 2022

## 7 INDICATOR 2: GENDER COMPOSITION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

Total gender composition of governing body (governing body is defined as Councillors of the Loddon Shire) as at June 30 2021, as reported in Workplace Gender Equality Audit (WGEA):

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	3	60%
Female	2	40%
Self-described	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100%</b>

The results indicate there is positive representation of both genders, however similar to the findings of the workforce gender composition; there is no mechanism for the governing body to self-identify their gender other than either male or female.

### 7.1 Actions relating to this indicator:

Action	Responsible Officer	Reasoning	Indicator of Success (Outcome)	Resources	Timing
Develop new councillor information form to include additional fields to address data gaps	Governance Coordinator; Human Resources Coordinator	To obtain more accurate data regarding councillor demographics	100% of councillor information forms are returned; data collated.	Existing	December 2022
Appointment of Victorian Local Government Women's Charter Champions at both a councillor and officer level	Councillors; Human Resources Coordinator	Reporting on progress toward the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter and more broadly gender equality	Positions appointed yearly	Existing	Completed 2022; ongoing

Action	Responsible Officer	Reasoning	Indicator of Success (Outcome)	Resources	Timing
Host a Victorian Local Government Women's Charter Afternoon Tea	Councillors; Human Resources Coordinator	Committed action under Council's commitment to the Local Government Women's Charter	Successful running of event	Existing	October 2022
Profile current and former women Councillors on their background, motivations for running for office and their achievements during their time as a Councillor.	Councillors; Executive and Commercial Services Officer; Human Resources Coordinator	Celebration and understanding of women Councillors	Promote and disseminate profiles to staff	Existing	December 2023
Celebrate the centenary of Mary Rogers' election – the first woman elected to local government in Victoria.	Learning and Development Officer	Celebration and understanding of women Councillors	Promote and disseminate anniversary to staff	Existing	Annually; ongoing

## 8 INDICATOR 3: PAY EQUITY

The median annualised base salary and remuneration, as reported in Workplace Gender Equality Audit (WGEA):

Employment Basis	Women's Pay Gap Percentage
Full-time permanent	-3.7%
Full-time fixed-term	-31.3%
Part-time permanent	0.5%
Part-time fixed-term	-19.1%
Casual	-7.8%

The Victorian Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector (The Commission) advises that the percentage pay gap as a positive indicates salaries of men are greater than women, whereas a negative indicates salaries of women are greater than men.

This data can be skewed by a number of factors including the Working for Victoria program and a higher percentage of women than men in part-time, fixed-term or casual categories.

In determining this data, employee salaries were converted to full-time equivalents including any projected income from superannuation and non-fixed amounts such as allowances.

Certain areas within Council attract allowances such as toileting allowance for kinder staff, and these areas have a higher percentage of women than men, contributing to a skewed total remuneration estimation. This is not necessarily indicative of the true state of balance between males, females and those who self-describe their gender, and work is required in this area to ensure Council's systems are better placed for the next Gender Equality Audit.

**8.1 Actions relating to this indicator:**

Action	Responsible Officer	Reasoning	Indicator of Success (Outcome)	Resources	Timing
Enhancement and development of payroll reporting capabilities to better report on required data for the next Gender Equality Audit	Human Resources Coordinator; Payroll Officer	To streamline reporting outcomes and reduce margin for error	Automated reporting of required data	Existing	June 2024

**9 INDICATOR 4: SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

In the reporting period of the GEAP (1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021) there were no formal sexual harassment complaints received by Council. This is contrasted with the results of the People Matter Survey of which 5% of all respondents answered yes when asked whether they had experienced sexual harassment.

Whilst the latter statistic is below the all council average of 7%, and the question does not specifically ask the respondent when they had experienced sexual harassment, Council acknowledges the importance of creating confidential mechanisms in order to report sexual behaviour.

Further information provided by the People Matter survey relating to sexual harassment include:

- 3% of respondents chose yes when asked if they had experienced 'sexually suggestive comments or jokes that made you feel offended (in either a group or one on one situation)',
- 2% of respondents chose yes when asked if they had experienced 'intrusive questions about your private life or comments about your physical appearance'.

When asked 'my organisation encourages respectful workplace behaviours' in the People Matter survey:

- 3% of respondents strongly disagreed,
- 5% of respondents disagreed,
- 7% of respondents neither agreed or disagreed,
- 49% of respondents agreed,
- 36% of respondents strongly agreed.

Council received an 85% favourable response rate as compared to the local government average of 83%.

When asked 'I feel safe to challenge inappropriate behaviour at work':

- 6% of respondents strongly disagreed,
- 7% of respondents disagreed,
- 5% of respondents neither agreed or disagreed,
- 49% of respondents agreed,
- 33% of respondents strongly agreed.

Council received an 82% favourable success rate as compared to the local government average of 70%.

Council received a higher favourable success rate across all sections in the workplace sexual harassment section of the People Matters Survey as compared to the local government average.

### 9.1 Actions relating to this indicator:

Action	Responsible Officer	Reasoning	Indicator of Success (Outcome)	Resources	Timing
Review of specific sexual harassment elearning training for all staff	Learning and Development Officer; Human Resources Coordinator	To better educate staff on what sexual harassment is, and the implications	Review and implementation of updated elearning module	Existing	October 2023
Development of a sexual harassment reporting form that goes directly to Human Resources	Human Resources Coordinator	Confidential mechanism to report sexual harassment	Form development, implementation and distribution.	Existing	March 2024

## 10 INDICATOR 5: RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

The People Matter survey provided the below information relating to recruitment and selection:

- When asked 'people in my workgroup actively support diversity and inclusion in the workplace', the responses were:
  - 0% of respondents strongly disagreed,
  - 5% of respondents disagree,
  - 11% of respondents neither agree not disagree,
  - 51% of respondents agreed,
  - 33% of respondents strongly agreed.

These responses indicate an 84% favourable response rate as compared to the local government average of 81%, which is a positive sign.

- When asked 'cultural background is not a barrier to success in my organisation':
  - 0% of respondents strongly disagreed,
  - 5% of respondents disagreed,
  - 10% of respondents neither agreed or disagreed,
  - 52% of respondents agreed,
  - 31% of respondents strongly agreed,
  - 2% of respondents didn't know.

These results were very positive, showing an 84% favourable response rate as compared to the local government average of 74%.

- When asked ‘disability is not a barrier to success in my organisation’:
  - 0% of respondents strongly disagreed,
  - 10% of respondents disagreed,
  - 13% of respondents neither agreed or disagreed,
  - 51% of respondents agreed,
  - 23% of respondents strongly agreed,
  - 3% of respondents didn’t know.

These results were again positive. Showing a 74% favourable response rate as compared to the local government average of 60%.

- When asked ‘gender is not a barrier to success in my organisation’:
  - 2% of respondents strongly disagreed,
  - 10% of respondents disagreed,
  - 7% of respondents neither agreed or disagreed,
  - 49% of respondents agreed,
  - 31% of respondents strongly agreed,
  - 1% of respondents didn’t know.

Loddon Shire Council was again ahead of the local government average, with Council receiving an 80% favourable response rate as compared to a 74% average.

All responses within the recruitment and selection section of the survey placed Council above the local government average.

**10.1 Actions relating to this indicator:**

Action	Responsible Officer	Reasoning	Indicator of Success (Outcome)	Resources	Timing
Review recruitment templates to ensure gender inclusive language	Human Resources Coordinator	Encourage all genders to apply for work with Council	Surveys to capture satisfaction with recruitment collateral	Existing	October 2022

**11 INDICATOR 6: LEAVE AND FLEXIBILITY**

The Commission defines flexible working as access to one or more of the following opportunities:

- Working more hours over fewer days
- Flexible start and finish times
- Working remotely (negotiated by the employee – i.e. not as a requirement under COVID-19 restrictions)
- Working part-time (negotiated by the employee only)
- Shift swap
- Job sharing
- Study leave

- Purchased leave
- Using leave to work flexible hours.

Through the Gender Equality Audit, the utilisation of flexible work arrangements by gender were identified, and the results were:

Gender	Number of staff
Female	5
Male	3
Self-described gender	0
Total	8

Examples of flexible work options within Council include 48/52 and utilisation of study leave (as approved in line with Council's Study Support Policy).

Since the submission of the Gender Equality Audit, Council has introduced a Flexible Work Options Policy to further advance its commitment to work-life balance.

#### 11.1 Actions relating to this indicator:

Action	Responsible Officer	Reasoning	Indicator of Success (Outcome)	Resources	Timing
Promotion of study leave policy to encourage more staff to partake	Human Resources Coordinator	Help encourage more work/life/study balance, and encourage staff to upskill	Maximum number of scholarships granted each year	Existing	March 2023

## 12 INDICATOR 7: GENDERED SEGREGATION

The People Matter Survey grouped employees in terms of their occupation utilising ANZSCO (Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations) categories. The most populous fields included:

Group	Number of Females	Number of Males
Managers (Inclusive of chief executive officers, general managers and department managers)	7	7
Professionals (inclusive of business, human resources, marketing, financial, information technology, engineering and science, surveyors and urban planners)	48	14
Education Professionals	18	0
Health Professionals (including occupational and environmental health, and health promotion)	10	1
Midwifery and Nursing Professionals	7	0
Community and Personal Services Professionals	25	1
Technician and Trades Professionals	0	7
Clerical and Administrative Professionals	29	10
Labouring Professionals	5	60
Farm, Forestry and Gardening Professionals	0	12

The ANZSCO categories are broad and work to categorise occupations into groups which are then narrowed down using a six digit numbering system.

As an example, the Chief Executive Officer is categorised as:

- major group 1 – all managers;
- sub-major group 11 – manager
- minor group 111 – chief executive officers, general managers and legislators,
- unit group 1111 – chief executive officers and managing directors,
- occupation 11111 – chief executive officer.

As the ANZSCO categories and codes are pre-set, some Council roles proved hard to categorise in this format. An example of this was the Children & Youth Coordinator who is classified higher than an Education Professional as their role oversees the kindergarten function of Council but does not regularly teach. Due to the absence of a Children & Youth Coordinator code, the position was eventually classified as 131341 – Childcare Manager. Council roles were classified as accurately as possible within the confines of the ANZSCO categories.

This information provides valuable insight into occupational categories that have a higher percentage of a particular gender and informs the actions for this indicator.

### 12.1 Actions relating to this indicator:

Action	Responsible Officer	Reasoning	Indicator of Success (Outcome)	Resources	Timing
Increase of diversity in areas with a high percentage of one gender (example Works Department, male)	Human Resources Coordinator; Loddon Leaders	Promotion of vacancies amongst women or minority groups	Increase in gender diversity through the development of a specific gender diversity promotion plan	Existing	October 2023