# GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN
2026-30




WEST
WIMMERA
SHIRE COUNCIL

## Contents

**Introduction and message from the CEO ..... 3**

**Development of Gender Equality Action Plan (Consultation) ..... 5**

**Results of Audit (Case for change) ..... 6**

Indicator 1: Gender composition of all levels of the workforce ..... 9

Indicator 2: Gender composition of the governing body ..... 11

Indicator 3: Equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value across all levels of the workforce, irrespective of gender ..... 12

Indicator 4: Sexual harassment in the workplace ..... 14

Indicator 5: Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace ..... 15

Indicator 6: Availability and utilisation of terms and conditions and practices relating to family violence leave, flexible working arrangements ad working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities ..... 17

Indicator 7: Gendered segregation within the workplace ..... 18

**Key actions and strategic objectives ..... 19**

## Message from the CEO

*West Wimmera Shire Council is committed to creating a gender equitable, safe, and respectful environment for all employees. The focus of this Gender Equality Action Plan is to provide an integrated whole-of-Council approach to increase gender equality within West Wimmera Shire.*

*Council is committed to the principles of Equal Employment Opportunity and Human Rights. West Wimmera Shire Council's Human Resources policy strives to maintain a working environment free from discrimination. Equal Opportunity is embedded in Council's recruitment actions, both internal and external.*
*Selection of individuals for employment, promotion or advancement, training and staff development are based on personal merit in fair and open competition according to the skills, qualifications, knowledge, and efficiency relevant to the position involved.*

*All Council staff are required to complete Equal Opportunity training every three years, verified during annual staff reviews. Employees are encouraged to raise equal opportunity issues or grievances with any manager, director, chief executive officer or senior officer as they arise.*

*The Gender Equality Act 2020 commenced on 31 March 2021 and aims to improve workplace gender equality. West Wimmera Shire Council sees this as more than a statutory requirement and recognises the value of diversity within both its workforce and its community. Council continues to be a member of the CoRE (Communities of Respect and Equality) Alliance, a partnership of organisations, businesses, clubs and groups who share a vision for safe, equal, and respectful communities in the Grampians region. Council has maintained this membership since 2016.*



David Bezuidenhout
Chief Executive Officer

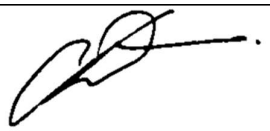
***Acknowledgement of Country***

***The West Wimmera Shire Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, and pays respect to their elders, past, present and emerging.***

**Attestation by head of organisation**

I confirm that:

☒ I am the head of organisation (CEO or equivalent)
☒ I have reviewed and approved the submission of this gender equality action plan (GEAP) on behalf of my organisation (as named above), and I attest that the implementation of the GEAP will be adequately resourced as required under the Gender Equality Act (2020).

| | |
|---|---|
| **Name** | David Bezuidenhout |
| **Role title** | Chief Executive Officer |
| **Signed** |  |
| **Date** | 30 October 2026 |

## Development and Consultation of Gender Equality Action Plan

Council undertook a workplace gender audit based on data as at 30 June 2025, which was submitted to the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector (the Commission) in December. The audit included workforce and employee experience data collected from payroll information and the People Matter Survey (PMS).

The PMS included questions developed in consultation with the Commission to deliver data to meet Gender Equality Act reporting obligations.

Our consultation process reflects the requirements set out in the Victorian Gender Equality Act (2020). Council consulted with, and sought input into, the development of the Gender Equality Action Plan from Councillors as its governing body, employees, and relevant trade unions and/or their employee representatives.

To improve consultation processes, Council will utilize the Consultative Committee to guide, support and monitor the implementation of gender equality strategies, provide guidance and feedback to the Executive Leadership Team.

| Consulted with | Confirm yes or no | Comment |
|---|---|---|
| Governing body (if your organisation has one) | Yes | Councillors and staff took part in a Gender Equality Workshop as a part of the Councillor Inductions following the 2024 Local Government Elections. |
| Employees | Yes | The Senior Leadership Team meet monthly and regular updates on the GEAP have been provided allowing an opportunity for feedback and input.<br><br>The GEAP was distributed to all staff for information and feedback via intranet and all staff communications. Hard copies were distributed to outdoor staff who don't have access to IT.<br><br>The GEAP is to be presented to the Consultative Committee Meeting and all staff meeting for feedback also.<br><br>Council participated in Gender Equality training facilitated by Melissa Morris, Women's Health Grampians to discuss the GEAP and assist staff in developing the skills to undertake Equal Impact Assessments. |
| Employee representatives, including relevant trade unions | Yes | The Australian Services Union and the Australian Education Union were provided a copy of the GEAP for information and an opportunity for feedback. |

## Results of Audit

The audit collected data on the following gender equality indicators:

- Gender composition of all levels of the workforce
- Gender composition of governing bodies
- Equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value across all levels of the workforce, irrespective of gender
- Sexual harassment
- Recruitment and promotion practices
- Availability and utilisation of terms, conditions and practices relating to family violence leave, flexible working arrangements and working arrangements for those with family or caring responsibilities
- Gendered segregation within the workplace

The results of data relating to each indicator are each considered in this section, though Council's ability to collect data relating to some of the indicators was limited. Council does not currently collect intersectional data such as disability status, sexual orientation, cultural identity or religion. Staff are able to nominate whether they recognise as 'female, male, non-binary and unspecified' through Council's on-boarding process.

As a small workforce, indicators may render groups too small to maintain confidentiality and uphold data security principles, even with data generalisation. As per the Commission's advice, Council considers the results of the 2021 audit a 'baseline' assessment of its workplace gender equality and a starting point for future assessment and improvement, and a point to measure progress against.

**Gender equality principles**

In developing the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP), the organisation has considered and applied the gender equality principles by embedding fairness, inclusion and equality across all stages of planning and decision – making.

A gender impact approach was used to assess workplace data, policies and practices to identify areas of gender inequality, including workforce composition, pay equality and access to opportunities. This ensured that actions are evidence-based and targeted towards addressing identified gaps.

Consultation with employees was undertaken to understand lived experiences and perceptions across genders, helping to inform priorities and ensure the GEAP reflects the needs of the work force. The GEAP incorporates principles of equal opportunity and access by promoting fair recruitment and promotion practices, flexible working arrangements and support for employees with caring responsibilities. It also recognises intersectionality by considering how gender inequality may be compounded by other factors such as age, role type or employment status.

Strategies within the GEAP aim to address structural and cultural barriers, including unconscious bias, gendered role segregation and unequal access to leadership opportunities. Accountability measures, including leadership commitment, monitoring and regular reporting, have been included to track progress and ensure continuous improvement.

**Gender pay equity principles**

In developing the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP), gender pay equality principles were embedded to ensure remuneration practices are fair, transparent and free from gender bias. A comprehensive analysis of workforce data was undertaken, including base salary and total remuneration by gender. This analysis identified areas where gender pay gaps exist or may emerge, enabling evidence-based actions to be developed.

Consideration was also given to the broader drivers of pay inequality, including gendered workforce segregation, representation at senior levels and access to higher duties and acting opportunities. The organisation reviewed its remuneration and employment practices to ensure consistency and objectivity. This included strengthening recruitment processes, applying clear classification frameworks and monitoring decisions that may impact pay outcomes. Equitable access to training, development and promotional opportunities were also supported. Consultation with employees and leadership provided additional insight to potential barriers to equitable pay and progression.

Council is committed to the gender equality principles set out by the Act:

(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 equity.

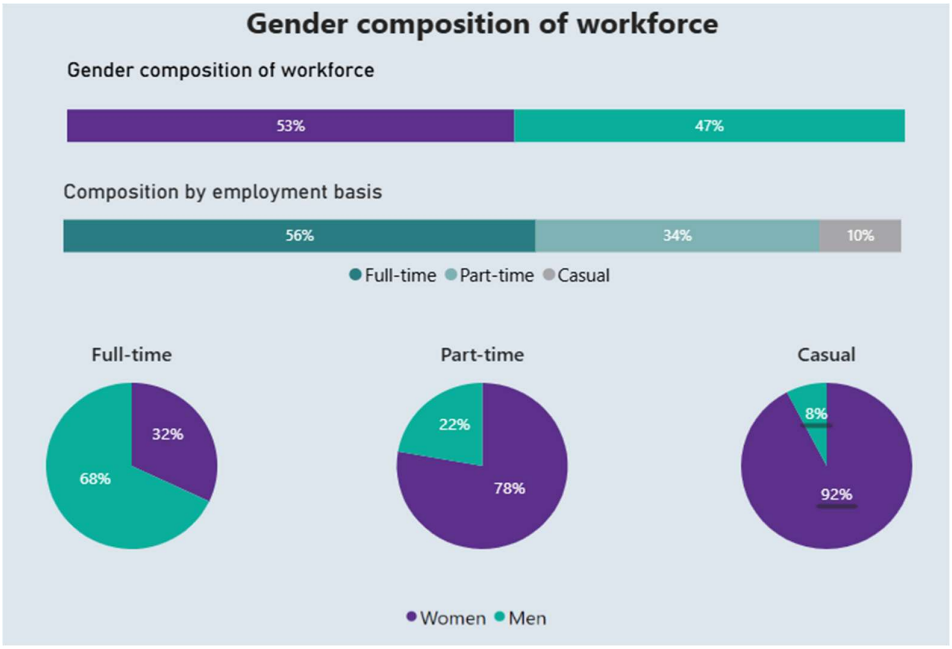
**Intersectional gender inequality**

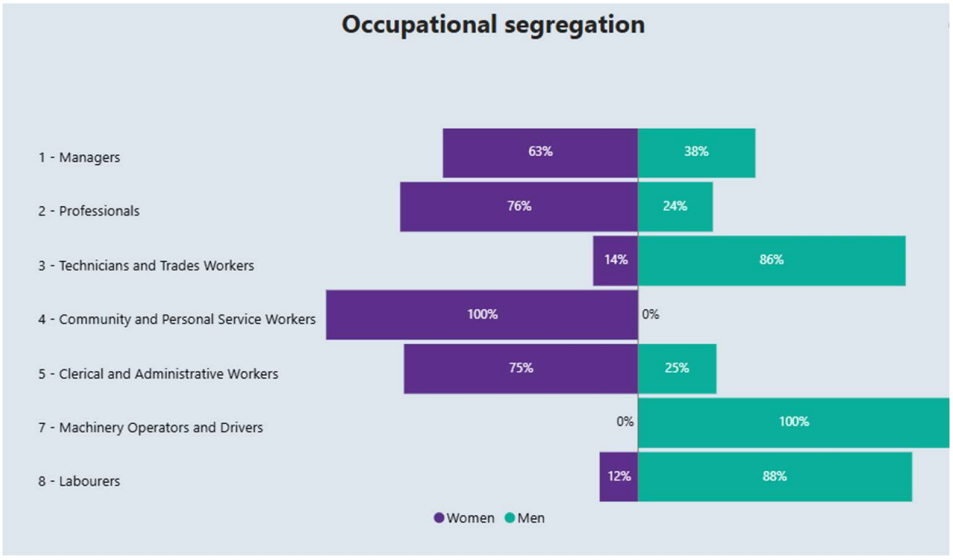
In developing the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP), intersectional gender inequality was considered to ensure gender impacts are not viewed in isolation from other overlapping forms of disadvantage. The organisation recognised that employees may experience compounded inequality based on factors such as gender, age, disability, cultural and linguistic diversity, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity, caring responsibilities and socio-economic background.

Workforce data analysis was undertaken where available to identify patterns of representation, pay and progression across these intersecting characteristics. This highlighted groups who may face additional barriers to recruitment, career development, leadership pathways or equitable access to flexible working arrangements.

The GEAP also incorporates qualitative insights from consultation processes, which provide further understanding to how intersecting identities can influence workplace experience, inclusion and opportunity. Strategies were then developed to address these inequalities, including strengthening inclusive recruitment practices, improving access to training and development for underrepresented groups and embedding flexible work practices that support diverse employment needs. Monitoring and reporting mechanisms were also considered to track progress over time and ensure accountability.

## Indicator 1: Gender composition of all levels of the workforce



### Describe the key gender inequality findings identified by the audit

- Council's overall breakdown of gender is close to equal, however when considered by employment type, women occupy the majority of part-time roles, and less than one fifth of full-time roles in the organisation.

- Gender segregation persists within some work environments eg. outdoor staff and early years staff.

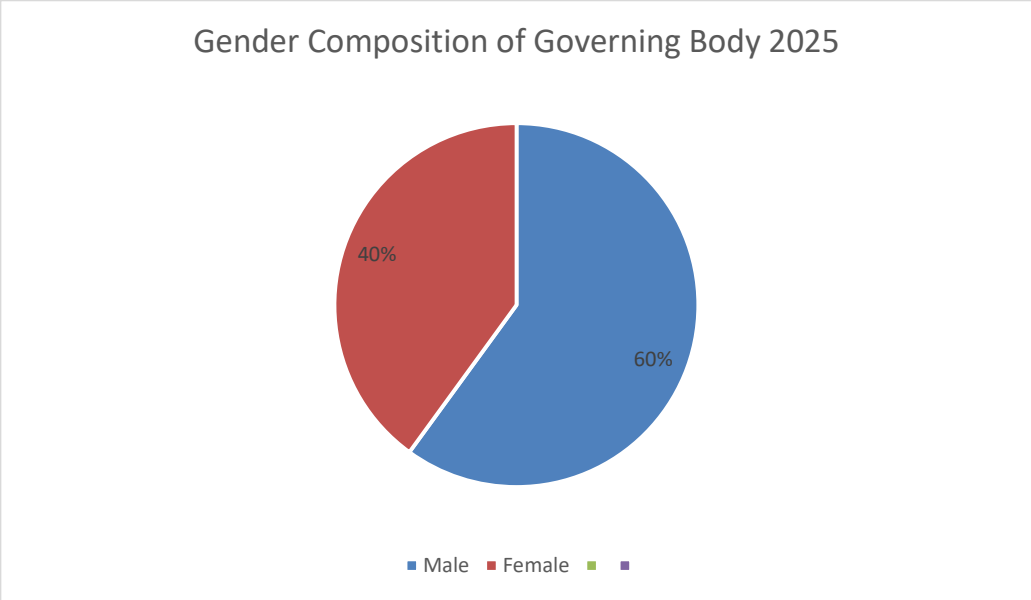
### What will you measure to assess the performance of your strategies

- Leadership reporting on gender equality progress
- Review of GEAP strategies via the Consultative Committee.

### Strategies

- Encourage female officers to partake in professional development related to leadership development.
- Addressing structural barriers to ensure flexible work is accessible and supported.
- Utilise the Consultative Committee to guide, support and monitor the implementation of gender equality strategies.
- Promote WWSC as an inclusive organisation that reflects the diverse community it serves.

## Indicator 2: Gender composition of the governing body




### Describe the key gender inequality findings identified by the audit

West Wimmera Shire Council's governing body is a group of five elected members (Councillors), serving a four-year term. The current gender composition (above) differs from the composition of the organisation overall, which is considerably more balanced in terms of gender. According to the Victorian Local Government Association (VLGA), the average gender composition of governing bodies is 57% male and 43% female. A predominantly male Council is an historically consistent trend for West Wimmera however, whilst the current Mayor is male, Council has elected a female Mayor at least five times in the past. Following the 2024 elections, two female councillors were elected, representing an increase from one female councillor at the previous elections.

### What will you measure to assess the performance of your strategies

- Results of the Local Government elections
- Number of female and male candidates during next elections

### Strategies

- Council will encourage candidates to attend candidate information sessions.

# Indicator 3: Equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value across all levels of the workforce, irrespective of gender

2026 Progress report

## Indicator 3: Equal pay

### 3.1 Mean total remuneration gender pay gap by occupation groups

Critical measure

| Occupation groups | Women | | Self-described | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2023 | 2025 | 2023 | 2025 |
| 1 - Managers | 24.8 % | 30.6 % | *** | *** |
| 2 - Professionals | 2.7 % | 6.5 % | *** | *** |
| 3 - Technicians and Trades Workers | *** | 15.4 % | *** | *** |
| 4 - Community and Personal Service Workers | -3.7 % | *** | *** | *** |
| 5 - Clerical and Administrative Workers | 12.5 % | 16.0 % | *** | *** |
| 6 - Sales Workers | *** | *** | *** | *** |
| 7 - Machinery Operators and Drivers | 8.6 % | *** | *** | *** |
| 8 - Labourers | 10.2 % | 7.4 % | *** | *** |
| **All occupations** | **-0.3 %** | **2.8 %** | *** | *** |

**Summary**

*** means data is unavailable for this result

This measure can be interpreted in many ways. Consider your specific data, your organisational context and other related measures to identify what is important. Refer to the Analysing your workplace gender audit results guide for further support.

### 3.3 Mean base salary gender pay gap

| | 2023 | 2025 | % change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Women | -0.3 % | 2.8 % | 3.1 % |
| Self-described | *** | *** | N/A |

*** means data is unavailable for this result

**Summary**

Between 2023 and 2025, the gender pay gap between a given gender and men was as follows:
- for women, widened from -0.3% to 2.8%
- for people of self-described gender, data was unavailable in 2023 and 2025

### 3.2 Mean total remuneration senior leader gender pay gap

Critical measure

| | 2023 | 2025 | % change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Women | 14.9 % | 12.4 % | -2.5 % |
| Self-described | *** | *** | N/A |

*** means data is unavailable for this result

**Summary**

Between 2023 and 2025, the gender pay gap (average total earnings) between a given gender and men was as follows:
- for women, narrowed from 14.9% to 12.4%
- for people of self-described gender, data was unavailable in 2023 and 2025

### Describe the key gender inequality findings identified by the audit

- Between 2023 and 2025, the gender pay gap between a given gender and men was:
  for women, widened from 0.3 to 2.8%. This change could be due to the transition of Home and Community Care Services and also Maternal Health where a significant number of female dominated roles exited the organisation over the last two years.
- There has been an increase in women managers from 24.8% in 2023 to 30.6% in 2025. There has also been an increase in technicians and trade workers from 2.7 in 2023 to 6.5% in 2025 due to more interest and support to encourage women to apply in areas normally dominated by men. There has been a decrease of community and personal services workers due to transition of services as mentioned above.
- Between 2023 and 2025, the gender pay gap between a given gender and men:
  - For women, narrowed from 14.9% to 12.4% which is a positive result.

### What will you measure to assess the performance of your strategies

- Regular internal review of remuneration gaps

### Strategies

- Conduct annual remuneration paygap reviews
- Ensure accurate collection of data for future reviews

### Indicator 4: Sexual harassment in the workplace

Anonymous experience rate of sexual harassment in 2025: 0
Number of formal reports of sexual harassment in 2025: 0

### Describe the key gender inequality findings identified during the audit

- No experience or reports of sexual harassment in the workplace.
- There were no formal sexual harassment complaints made in the reporting period. The PMS results also indicated generally favourable responses regarding the organisation's approach and response to inappropriate workplace behaviours.

### What will you measure to assess the performance of your strategies

- Reports of sexual harassment to be monitored.
- Regular training through Learning Management System and participation rate monitored.

### Strategies

- Review the platform for staff to securely report instances of sexual harassment and promote awareness of external channels for staff to raise issues, should they not wish to access internal channels.

# Indicator 5: Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace

2026 Progress report

## Indicator 5: Recruitment and promotion practices

### 5.1 Gender composition of recruited employees

Critical measure

| | 2023 | 2025 | % change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Women | 64.5 % | 57.7 % | -6.8 % |
| Men | 35.5 % | 42.3 % | 6.8 % |
| Self-described | 0.0 % | 0.0 % | 0.0 % |

*** means data is unavailable for this result

**Summary**

Between 2023 and 2025, the proportion of new recruits for each gender group was as follows:

- for women, decreased from 64.5% to 57.7%
- for men, increased from 35.5% to 42.3%
- for people of self-described gender, remained the same at 0.0%

### 5.2 Gender composition of promoted employees

Critical measure

| | 2023 | 2025 | % change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Women | *** | *** | N/A |
| Men | *** | *** | N/A |
| Self-described | *** | *** | N/A |

*** means data is unavailable for this result

**Summary**

Between 2023 and 2025, the proportion of promotions that went to each gender group was as follows:

- for women, data was unavailable in 2023 and 2025
- for men, data was unavailable in 2023 and 2025
- for people of self-described gender, data was unavailable in 2023 and 2025

### 5.3 Perceptions of recruitment by gender

Critical measure

| | 2023 | 2025 | % change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Women | 66.7 % | 48.1 % | -18.5 % |
| Men | 100.0 % | 54.5 % | -45.5 % |
| Self-described | *** | *** | N/A |

*** means data is unavailable for this result

**Summary**

Between 2023 and 2025, the proportion of respondents who believed that recruitment processes at our organisation are fair was as follows:

- for women, decreased from 66.7% to 48.1%
- for men, decreased from 100.0% to 54.5%
- for people of self-described gender, data was unavailable in 2023 and 2025

### 5.4 Perceptions of promotion by gender

Critical measure

| | 2023 | 2025 | % change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Women | *** | 40.7 % | N/A |
| Men | *** | 45.5 % | N/A |
| Self-described | *** | *** | N/A |

*** means data is unavailable for this result

**Summary**

Between 2023 and 2025, the proportion of respondents who agreed that promotion processes at our organisation are fair was as follows:

- for women, 40.7% in 2025 and data was unavailable in 2023
- for men, 45.5% in 2025 and data was unavailable in 2023
- for people of self-described gender, data was unavailable in 2023 and 2025

## Describe the key gender inequality findings identified during the audit

The 2025 Survey results indicate a widening gap in perceptions of fairness and career progression within Council.

**5.1 Gender composition of recruited employees**
Between 2023 and 2025 the proportion of new recruits for each gender group was:
For women, decreased from 64.5 to 57.7% due to transition of Home and Community Care services and maternal health services, predominately women filled by women.
For men, increased from 35.5 to 42.3%
**5.2 Gender composition of promoted employees**
Between 2023 and 2025, the proportion of promotions that went to each gender group, the data was unavailable.
**5.3 Perceived Fairness in Recruitment**
Male agreement decreased significantly from 100% (2023) to 54.5% (2025)
Female agreement declined from 66.7% (2023) to 48.1% (2025)
**5.4 Fairness of Promotion Processes**
Male agreement 45.5% (2025)
Female agreement 44.7% (2025)
There was no data available for 2023

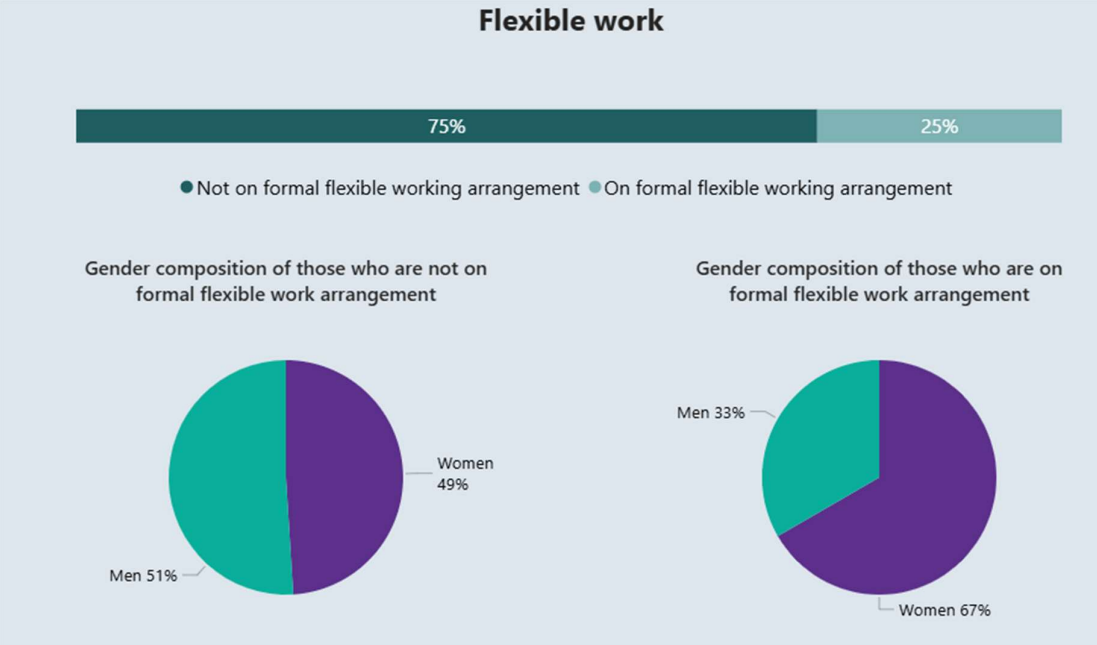
## What will you measure to assess the performance of your strategies

- Annual review of recruitment statistics

## Strategies

- Unconscious bias training for staff participating in interview panels/informing recruitment decisions
- Recruitment advertisements emphasising flexible work arrangements to accommodate different requirements.
- Ensure staff are aware of recruitment processes in accordance with Recruitment Policy.

## Indicator 6: Availability and utilisation of terms and conditions and practices relating to family violence leave, flexible working arrangements and working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities




### Describe the key gender inequality findings identified during the audit

- Data from the PMS was generally favourable regarding organisational support for accessing flexibility or family violence support.
- 67% of women are on formal flexible work arrangements. Council actively supports flexible and hybrid working arrangements.

### What will you measure to assess the performance of your strategies

- Feedback from annual performance reviews.
- Consultation with managers when changes to work life balance are impacted.

### Strategies

- Support flexible working arrangements (where possible) to allow staff to manage caring and family responsibilities

### Indicator 7: Gendered segregation within the workplace

### Describe the key gender inequality findings identified during the audit

- While Council demographics depict a remarkably even gender split overall, at a departmental level it's evident that the Corporate and Community Directorate is predominately made up of women, and the Infrastructure Development and Works Directorate predominately men. This data supports the long-standing trend of plant operation roles being occupied largely by men. Early years roles are predominately occupied by women which is a global trend with traditional gender roles viewing care as 'women's work' and administrative functions having higher proportions of female staff is further supported by the gender composition of staff as per the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZCO) codes.

### What will you measure to assess the performance of your strategies

- Annual reporting of gender segregations by departments

### Strategies

- Maintain CoRE (Communities of Respect and Equality) alliance membership and actively participate in programs and training.
- Education of managerial staff on employment recruitment selection.

| **Key Strategies** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Strategy | Indicator | Timeline | Responsible |
| Encourage female officers to partake in professional development related to leadership development. | 1 Gender composition of all levels of the workforce | Ongoing | Senior Leadership Team |
| Addressing structural barriers to ensure flexible work is accessible and supported. | 1 Gender composition of all levels of the workforce | Ongoing | Senior Leadership Team |
| Utilise the Consultative Committee to guide, support and monitor the implementation of gender equality strategies. | 1 Gender composition of all levels of the workforce | July 2026 | Human Resources and Governance |
| Promote WWSC as an inclusive organisation that reflects the diverse community it serves. | 1 Gender composition of all levels of the workforce | Ongoing | Human Resources and Governance |
| Council will encourage candidates to attend candidate information sessions. | 2 Gender composition of the governing body | June 2028 | Governance |
| Conduct annual remuneration paygap reviews | 3 Equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value across all levels of the workforce, irrespective of gender | Annually | Human Resources |
| Ensure accurate collection of data for future reviews | 3 Equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value across all levels of the workforce, irrespective of gender | Annually | Human Resources |
| Review the platform for staff to securely report instances of sexual harassment and promote awareness of external channels for staff to raise issues, should they not wish to access internal channels. | 4: Sexual harassment in the workplace | December 2026 | Human Resources |
| Unconscious bias training for staff participating in interview panels/informing recruitment | 5: Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace | July 2027 | Human Resources |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| decisions | | | |
| Recruitment advertisements emphasising flexible work arrangements to accommodate different requirements. | 5: Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace | Ongoing | Human Resources |
| Ensure staff are aware of recruitment processes in accordance with Recruitment Policy. | 5: Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace | Ongoing | Human Resources |
| Support flexible working arrangements (where possible) to allow staff to manage caring and family responsibilities | 6: Availability and utilisation of terms and conditions and practices relating to family violence leave, flexible working arrangements and working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities | Ongoing | Senior Leadership Team |
| Maintain CoRE (Communities of Respect and Equality) alliance membership and actively participate in programs and training. | 7: Gendered segregation within the workplace | Ongoing | Human Resources |
| Education of managerial staff on employment selection recruitment selection. | 7: Gendered segregation within the workplace | December 2027 | Human Resources |

## Resourcing

West Wimmera Shire Council is in a position to be a champion of change. We aim to create a safe and inclusive environment where everyone is valued for who they are and what they have to offer. Council will be guided by the gender equality principles outlined in the Act and will develop this plan accordingly. We will continue to report on statistics of participation and experiences of our staff.

Council's Gender Equality Action Plan 2026-2030 aims to promote gender equality within our workforce and improve outcomes for people of all genders.

Under the Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic), Council is required to ensure adequate resources are invested to implement its GEAP. Properly resourcing the implementation of the GEAP is critical to delivering on our commitments to staff and meeting our obligation under the Act to make reasonable and material progress towards workplace gender equality.

The delivery of this plan will be overseen by the Corporate and Community Services Directorate and resourced through the Governance and Human Resources teams. Council will utilise the Consultative Committee to guide, support and monitor the implantation of gender equality strategies, provide guidance and feedback to the Executive Leadership Team.

A significant number of actions within the GEAP will be delivered by our Human Resources team. If required, Council will make budgetary adjustments to meet commitments set out in this GEAP.