

Progress Report February 2024
Supplementary Report



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Candlelight Vigil 2023

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Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the South Gippsland Shire Council's Gender Equality Action Plan 2022 to 2026 for the period up to 1 July 2023 and shows the ongoing commitment to being a gender equitable organisation that is free from violence, supportive and inclusive.

Our role as one of the largest employers in our region, as well as being a defined entity under the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, is to take necessary and proportionate action towards achieving gender equality in all that we do. This is not just about complying with our obligations under this legislation. This is about making real and meaningful change that will make a difference to the lives of every member of our workforce and community.

South Gippsland Shire Council's Gender Equality Action Plan:

- expresses our organisational culture, values, leadership and commitment to diversity and inclusion both in the workplace, and as role models in the community.
- identifies where change is needed in our organisation and details actions that will achieve progress towards this change.
- provides a clear framework for South Gippsland Shire Council's policies and actions aimed at improving gender equality and reducing violence against women and children within the workforce, and more broadly, within our community, services and programs and services.

South Gippsland Shire Council's Gender Equality Action Plan comprises 24 actions under the seven Gender Equality Indicators. As of 1 July 2023, ten actions have been completed, six are in progress, four are ongoing commitments and three actions are scheduled for delivery in 2024 and 2025. A new action related to family violence leave was embedded into the plan in 2023 and activity will be an ongoing commitment for South Gippsland Shire Council.

Highlights and achievements on the strategies set out in South Gippsland Shire Council's Gender Equality Action Plan include:

- strengthening of Council's action to support Free from Violence: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence. In 2023, a new action was embedded into the plan to enhance Council practices relating to family violence leave and to support Council in the work undertaken with local partners. Since then, an updated family leave clause was embedded in South Gippsland Shire Council's Enterprise Agreement 2022 and a Gender Equality for Leaders training program was undertaken by Council's Managers and Coordinators. Council established a partnership in 2023 with Gippsland Women's Health and Bass Coast Shire Council for the delivery of Active Bystander training for South Gippsland Shire Council employees.
- improvement in the awareness and knowledge of behavioural expectations and clear and accurate information regarding sexual harassment reporting and the processes available. In 2023, Council launched its first ever stand-alone Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Policy. The new policy was supported by a clearer process for reporting sexual harassment, introduction of Contact Officers, and a comprehensive training program. The results from the 2023 People Matter Survey data showed that 72% of respondents answered favourably to the question, 'My organisation takes steps to eliminate bullying, harassment and discrimination', an increase of 6% from 2021. This result was also 3% more favourable than the local government benchmark. In addition, 82% of respondents answered favourably to the question, my organisation encourages respectful behaviours, an increase of 2% from

- 2021 and 1% above the local government benchmark. Significant improvement was made on the question, 'I feel safe to challenge inappropriate behaviour at work' with 71% of respondents answering favourably, an increase of 8% from 2021.
- the role of strong leadership in driving organisational change. Leaders across Council have played a significant role in the achievement of the strategies already completed and the significant work in progress on the remaining strategies. The Executive and Senior Leadership teams have been unified on the vision and commitments set out in the plan and have shown visible support for priorities such as the improved transparency of remuneration practices, the maturing of inclusive procedures for recruitment and promotion and embedding gender impact analysis into existing work practices.
- the impact of a holistic and consistent investment in learning for all employees. A focus on improving opportunities for learning and development has seen an increase in the participation of our outdoor workforce in areas related to leadership and active bystander training. The 2023 People Matter survey data also demonstrated a 16% improvement since the 2021 survey for the question, 'I am satisfied with the way my learning and development has been addressed in the last 12 months'.
- an improved culture of equity across Council. During the reporting period, seven employees
 (five women and two men) were promoted into leadership and senior professional positions
 and an analysis on the 19 secondments showed that 15 were women. In addition, the focus
 on flexible work has seen increased opportunities for men to take carers leave and parental
 leave arrangements. In our 2021 People Matter Survey results, 83% of employees responded
 that they felt confident that they would have a flexible work arrangement considered when
 requested. This increased slightly in 2023 to 84% which was 7% higher than the average local
 government benchmark.



Let's Chat 2023 - Walk Against Family Violence

South Gippsland Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-2026

Table 1: Action plan at a glance

Indicators	1 - Gender composition of the workforce	2 - Gender composition of governing bodies	3 - Equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value across all levels of the workforce, irrespective of gender	4 - Sexual harassment in the workplace	5 - Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace	6 - Availability and utilisation of terms, conditions and practices relating to family violence leave, flexible working arrangements and working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities
Actions	1.1 - Improve recruitment practices to attract diverse candidates and increase the number of applications received from these candidates.	2.1 - Council to continue to promote activities and external organisations which focus on encouraging women to be more equally represented at all levels of government, in particular local government e.g. the 50/50 by 2030 Foundation, Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA).	3.1 - Conduct analysis into identified pay gaps, to identify reasons for the gap in pay and its relationship with gender and intersectional factors.	4.1 - Ensure the Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Policy is updated regularly, with legislative updates and process changes to ensure employees have clear and accurate information available regarding sexual harassment reporting and processes available.	5.1 - Review recruitment practices to ensure that inclusive language and processes are utilised throughout each stage of the hiring process.	6.1 - Review flexible working options and promote the utilisation of flexible working to all employees, particularly teams/departments who have low utilisation.

1.2 - Promote flexible work practices across all areas of the workforce and via external communication channels	3.2 - Address any known pay gaps via changes in policies and processes.	4.2 - Identify and document reporting mechanisms, processes and internal contacts for sexual harassment complaints.	5.2 - Implement a talent management and succession planning program.	6.2 - Review the parental leave policy and ensure that parental leave options are given to men to encourage greater utilisation of paid parental leave.
1.3 - Educate leaders on the benefit of part time/job share arrangements in leadership and senior professional positions, with a focus on improving the number of part-time women who are offered higher duties and secondment opportunities.	3.3 - Educate hiring managers about gender pay gaps and ensure that there is a clear process for managing salary negotiations at the time of hire/engagement.	4.3 - Educate all employees on reporting procedures and internal contacts for sexual harassment complaints.	5.3 - Review internal promotion processes, including rationale for identifying suitability of candidates.	6.3 - Review the recording practices of flexible working utilisation and ensure that both formal and informal options are being captured. This will support Council to identify where gaps may exist and support future reporting requirements.
1.4 - Review and analyse team gender composition and identify two teams to trial targeted recruitment initiatives to increase gender representation.	3.4 - Apply a gender lens to all new Enterprise Agreements. Ensure that the Enterprise Bargaining Committee are aware of the principles of gender equality and that the committee is comprised of members from different genders.	4.4 - Provide disclosure training to all leaders and key contacts within Council.	5.4 - Review and update payroll reporting of all higher duties, secondment and promotion actions to support future reporting and analysis.	6.4 - Review carers leave data to identify if there are utilisation gaps. Conduct further consultation with employees to understand their reasons for utilising carers leave and if there are any underlying barriers to using carers leave in

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			different
			teams/departments.
		5.5 - Conduct training	6.5 - Implement a
		for hiring managers	process to capture
		which aims to build	Australian and New
		the capability of	Zealand Standard
		hiring managers in	Classification of
		conducting inclusive	Occupations
		recruitment	(ANZSCO) codes in
		processes and	Council's payroll
		supporting Council's	system. Educate the
		vision for a diverse	People and Culture
		and inclusive	team on the ANZSCO
		workforce.	coding system to
			ensure reporting of
			positions is accurate
			and consistent.

Gender Equality Action Plan 2022 to 2026 2024 Progress Report: Supporting Document

Indicator one: Gender composition of the workforce

Action	Progress
Improve recruitment practices to attract diverse candidates and increase the number of applications received from these candidates.	 COMPLETED A comprehensive review of South Gippsland Shire Council's recruitment policy was completed in 2023. New support mechanisms for hiring managers have been implemented including Council's first ever interview question library and gender equality coaching sessions by Human Resources Business Partners to Hiring Managers were launched in 2023. School community career events and a local career pathways program have been successfully implemented in collaboration with local partner organisations in 2022 and 2023. IN PROGRESS An evaluation of recruitment and selection tools and methodologies is underway and is scheduled for completion in 2024. The learning design, including a focus on unconscious bias and inclusive interview skills, has commenced in readiness for delivery of recruitment and selection workshops in 2024.
Promote flexible work practices across all areas of the workforce and via external communication channels	 Promotion of flexible plus hybrid ways of working was implemented across all Directorates in 2023 with the active sponsorship of South Gippsland Shire Council's Executive Leadership Team, Senior Leaders, and the Diversity and Inclusion Working Group. The program of work was led by a cross functional working group who engaged over 200 people in the design of a Hybrid PLUS Flexible model of working and included input into the refurbished main office design and Council wide implementation of a Hybrid PLUS Flexible work plan template. The South Gippsland Shire Council's Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2022-2025 was successfully launched and includes actions for increasing gender equity in work, education, and recreation settings. Activities include a working group for the Fair Access Policy, community partnerships with GippsSport for promoting the Orange Round, and the establishment of a South Gippsland community Access and Inclusion Committee.

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	 IN PROGRESS A review of the updated Working from Home and Flexible Work policies is scheduled for 2024. Example scenarios on flexibility options that demonstrate support for individual needs and customer centricity are being collated for embedding in the 2024 Hybrid PLUS Flexible promotional campaign. The Flexible PLUS Hybrid model of working approach will be embedded in the 2024/25 Performance and Development Plan cycle and associated development programs and support materials.
Educate leaders on the benefit of part time/job share arrangements in leadership and senior professional positions, with a focus on improving the number of part-time women who are offered higher duties and secondment opportunities.	 COMPLETED Considerable progress was achieved in 2023 with the completion of a promotional campaign led by Executive Leaders with their respective leadership teams on the benefits and opportunities for part time/job share arrangements in leadership and senior professional positions. In 2023, Senior Leaders participated in a session to unpack the range of opportunities available for developing employees with a focus on the benefits of higher duties and secondments to backfill planned leave arrangements.
	 IN PROGRESS A new reporting process for oversight and communication about job sharing, FTE distribution, higher duty appointments and flexibility decisions is in progress and planned for launch in 2024. Ongoing advocacy by the Executive Leadership team on the opportunities for part time/job share arrangements in leadership and senior professional positions. Work is underway to re-consider the processes currently in use for filling short term role vacancies, encouraging leaders to think differently about the approach to manage planned leave vacancies and to plan early to enable the development of staff to be ready to take up short term higher duties.
Review and analyse team gender composition and identify two teams to trial targeted recruitment initiatives to increase gender representation.	 COMPLETED A thorough review and analysis of gender composition was completed in 2023 and actions taken included full implementation of a new biannual review process for gender pay. This program of work included implementation of a new salary matrix tool and an enhanced governance process with oversight by the People and Remuneration Committee for gender pay and senior appointments. An enhanced process for senior appointments was also launched in 2023 and includes meetings convened with the Remuneration Committee.

 Infrastructure improvement projects were completed in 2023 to enhance the physical work environment at Council worksites that have a lower representation of female staff, including refurbishment at existing Council sites and design requirements at the new worksite at Foster. Scholarship funding has been provided in 2022/23 and 2023/24 to support the development of a diverse talent pool for critical roles such as engineers.
IN PROGRESS
 In progress is a review of the data collection process for assessing the gender composition in each department and identifying potential teams for trial of targeted recruitment activities in 2024/25.

Indicator two: Gender composition of governing bodies

Action	Progress
Council to continue to promote activities and external organisations which focus on encouraging women to be more equally represented at all levels of government, in particular local government e.g. the 50/50 by 2030 Foundation, Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA).	 COMPLETED Implementation of the Community Leadership Program in 2022 and 2023 which provided the opportunity for participants to strengthen leadership skills and apply program learnings to positively influence and support the development of local communities in South Gippsland. Ongoing membership is in place with the Australian Local Government Women's Association and Council promotes their events and training workshops, including the mentoring program. The Executive Leadership team and Council officers attended the Local Government Women's Day annual event. IN PROGRESS Additional opportunities such as Coffee with the CEO will be implemented as part of the 2024 Council Election activity to further support women running for election.



2023 Community Leadership Program alumni

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

Action	Progress
Conduct analysis into identified pay gaps, to identify reasons for the gap in pay and its relationship with gender and intersectional factors.	 COMPLETED The equity in remuneration project was successfully completed. This multi-year focus included analysis of manager remuneration and has resulted in all managers being paid consistently at the same base rate from 1 July 2023. A biannual review process for gender pay was implemented in 2023. This included launch of a new salary matrix tool and ongoing oversight from the People and Remuneration Committee with recommendations provided to the Chief Executive Officer.
	 IN PROGRESS Further analysis of pay gaps and the development of actions to improve gender and intersectional factors is an ongoing priority. A continued focus on equity in remuneration will see all Coordinator roles being paid consistently at the same base rate from 1 July 2024.
Address any known pay gaps via changes in policies and processes.	 COMPLETED In 2023, a full review of the recruitment policy and procedure was completed. A program of work was then delivered to improve the senior appointments process including a focus on transparency and oversight. The outcome of this work has resulted in equalisation of Senior Leadership salaries.
	 IN PROGRESS The Working from Home and Flexible Work policies are scheduled for a review in 2024.
Educate hiring managers about gender pay gaps and ensure that there is a clear process for managing salary negotiations at the time of hire/engagement.	 Equity in remuneration project for leaders completed. The 18-month project has resulted in all managers being paid consistently at the same rate from 1 July 2023. Gender equity in senior leader remuneration processes now include a new biannual review process with the inclusion of People and Remuneration Committee oversight. Recommendations are provided to the Chief Executive Officer and additional meetings with the People and Remuneration Committee are convened for senior appointments.

	 Gender equity coaching sessions by Human Resources Business Partners to Hiring Managers were successfully launched in 2023. The sessions are ongoing and occur at the time that a vacancy needs to be filled.
Apply a gender lens to all new Enterprise Agreements. Ensure that the Enterprise Bargaining Committee are aware of the principles of gender equality and that the committee is comprised of members from different genders.	 COMPLETED Training on the principles of gender equality was provided to the Staff Consultative Committee in April 2022 and a refresher is planned for 2024. South Gippsland Shire Council's Enterprise Agreement 2022 was completed and includes new clauses and/or revisions on: Parental leave: New provision to provide superannuation payments on all approved annual leave (including unpaid parental leave). Secondary carer paid leave increased from 2 weeks to 4 weeks. Requalifying period removed (was previously 12 months requalification period). Prenatal leave increased from 2 days to 5 days for primary carer, plus 1 day for secondary carer. Offsite work arrangements clause enhanced to consider equal opportunity and personal needs that may exist for families / carers. Gender transition / affirmation leave clause included (where the previously was none). Provisions include a range of supports available for employees, including paid leave. Family Violence clause significantly enhanced to provide a greater range of supports for employees, including paid leave, flexibility, location changes, etc. The clause also introduced a range of commitments about training of staff to support disclosures, and interventions such as job redesign. A breastfeeding clause was introduced (where previously there was none) to support parents and carers with paid breaks, adequate facilities for feeding and storage of milk The People Matter Survey 2023 results demonstrate positive impacts of these actions with 81% of employees responding favourably to the statement 'In my workgroup work is allocated fairly, regardless of gender'. In addition, 2023 survey result showed 93% of favourable responses for the question 'My organisation would support me if I needed to take family violence leave'. This is an increase of 9% from 2021 and was 6% higher than the local gov

Indicator four: Sexual harassment in the workplace

Action	Progress	
Ensure the Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Policy is updated regularly, with legislative updates and process changes to ensure employees have clear and accurate information available regarding sexual harassment reporting and processes available.	 The Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Policy was introduced in 2023 and its implementation was supported by a comprehensive training program: Senior Leaders undertook Gender Equality for Leaders Program. Respectful Behaviours training for all employees was completed by February 2023. Council employees have also attended Active Bystander training including Train the Trainer workshops. Reminders of obligations and the support mechanisms available for employees were embedded in the 2023 People Matters Survey results roll out sessions for each department. The 2023 People Matter Survey results showed a favourable increase of two points since the last survey with 94% responding they had not experienced sexual harassment at work. 	
Identify and document reporting mechanisms, processes, and internal contacts for sexual harassment complaints.	 COMPLETED Clearer processes for reporting sexual harassment were developed as part of the sexual harassment perfersh. This process enables informal reporting of sexual harassment, and further training has occurred support the People & Culture team to respond to these reports and disclosures. Contact officers appointed and training provided in 2023. IN PROGRESS Disclosure training is scheduled for delivery in 2024. 	
Educate all employees on reporting procedures and internal contacts for sexual harassment complaints.	 COMPLETED A comprehensive education program was implemented and involved Respectful Behaviours training for all employees being delivered by February 2023 with an ongoing cycle of refresher training scheduled. A continued focus on building capability and confidence has been embedded into Council's annual training plan. This includes targeted training for leaders to deepen their knowledge on responding to sexual harassment complaints as well as development of a community of practice for Contact Officers is in progress. A digital learning approach to compliment in-person learning is being planned and the design of a people leaders essentials program to maintain awareness of critical policies has also commenced. 	

	2023 People Matter Survey results showed a positive increase of four points since the last survey with 82% responding favourably to the question, 'My organisation encourages respectful workplace behaviours.'
Provide disclosure training to all leaders and key contacts within Council.	IN PROGRESS • Disclosure training for all leaders across Council is scheduled for delivery in 2024.

Indicator five: Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace

Action	Progress
Review recruitment practices to ensure that inclusive language and processes are utilised throughout each stage of the hiring process.	 COMPLETED A comprehensive review of South Gippsland Shire Council's recruitment policy was completed in 2023 and actions implemented in response include the 2023 launch of Council's first ever interview question library with scenario-based behavioural interview questions. In addition, training in the use of an implicit bias reflection tool was undertaken by the Senior Leadership Team. Council employees have also worked with local partner organisations to implement school community career events and a local career pathways program in 2022 and 2023.
	 IN PROGRESS The learning design, including a focus on unconscious bias and inclusive interview skills, has commenced for workshops on recruitment and selection. These are scheduled to be delivered in 2024. A review of recruitment and selection tools and methodologies is also underway to enhance the candidate experience and to introduce simplified and inclusive methods.
Implement a talent management and succession planning program.	 IN PROGRESS The development of a comprehensive approach for talent and succession including embedded practices for identifying, assessing, and developing talent is scheduled for delivery in 2026.

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Review internal promotion processes, including	IN PROGRESS
rationale for identifying suitability of candidates.	 A comprehensive review of internal promotion processes has commenced and is scheduled for completion in 2026.
Review and update payroll reporting of all higher duties, secondment and promotion actions to support future reporting and analysis.	 COMPLETED The payroll reporting project was completed in 2023 with updated payroll descriptions. The introduction of quarterly reporting to the Council's Executive Leadership Team was launched in 2023 and additional improvements on the process for identifying and recording higher duties are in progress.
Conduct training for hiring managers which aims to build the capability of hiring managers in conducting inclusive recruitment processes and supporting Council's vision for a diverse and inclusive workforce.	Gender equity coaching sessions by Human Resources Business Partners to Hiring Managers were successfully launched in 2023. The sessions are ongoing and occur at the time that a vacancy needs to be filled.
	IN PROGRESS • Learning design, including a focus on unconscious bias and interview skills, has commenced for delivery of workshops on recruitment and selection in 2024.

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

Action	Progress
Review flexible working options and promote the utilisation of flexible working to all employees, particularly teams/departments who have low utilisation.	 Full implementation of the flexible PLUS hybrid way of working model across Council was completed. This was promoted through the active sponsorship of Council's Executive Leadership Team and the Diversity and Inclusion Working Group. The program of work was led by a cross functional working group and included input into the refurbished main office design and Council wide implementation of a Hybrid PLUS Flexible work plan template. Flexible work coaching sessions by Human Resources Business Partners to People Leaders were successfully launched in 2023 and target teams/ departments with low utilisation.

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	 In 2021, People Matters Survey results showed 83% of employees responded that they felt confident that they would have a flexible work arrangement considered when requested. This increased slightly in 2023 to 84% which was 7% higher than the average local government benchmark. IN PROGRESS Example scenarios on the flexibility options for supporting individual needs are being collated for embedding in the 2024/25 Performance and Development Plan cycle including training programs and guides. A review of the updated Working from Home and Flexible Work policies is scheduled for 2024.
Review the parental leave policy and ensure that parental leave options are given to men to encourage greater utilisation of paid parental leave.	 COMPLETED The parental leave policy was reviewed in 2023 and a refreshed booklet is available on South Gippsland Shire Council's intranet. Three men have accessed paid parental leave in the progress reporting period.
Review the recording practices of flexible working utilisation and ensure that both formal and informal options are being captured. This will support Council to identify where gaps may exist and support future reporting requirements.	NOT STARTED • This strategy is in the planning phase of implementation and is scheduled for delivery in 2024.
Review carers leave data to identify if there are utilisation gaps. Conduct further consultation with employees to understand their reasons for utilising carers leave and if there are any underlying barriers to using carers leave in different teams/departments.	 NOT STARTED This strategy is in the planning phase of implementation and is scheduled for delivery in 2024.
Enhance Council practices relating to family violence leave and support Council in the work undertaken with local partners in Free from Violence program of work.	 COMPLETED Considerable progress has been made with an updated family leave clause embedded in the South Gippsland Shire Council's Enterprise Agreement 2022. Delivery of a comprehensive training plan is in progress and Gender Equality for Leaders training was undertaken by Council's Managers and Coordinators in 2023.

•	Council has implemented the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2022-2025 which
	includes actions for the promotion of the prevention of family violence and safer
	communities.

- Council has also established a partnership with Gippsland Women's Health and Bass Coast Shire Council for the delivery of Active Bystander training in 2023 for South Gippsland Shire Council employees.
- 2023 People Matter Survey results showed a positive increase of nine points since the last survey with 93% responding favourably to the question, 'My organisation would support me if I needed to take family violence leave'.

IN PROGRESS

- A continued focus on Active Bystander training is planned for 2024 and includes building internal capability to deliver Active Bystander Training as part of the 'One Gippsland' local partnership model.
- Ongoing participation in the 2024 Free from Violence campaigns in partnership with local community organisations.

Indicator seven: Gendered segregation within the workplace

Implement a process to capture Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) codes in Council's payroll system. Educate the People and Culture team on the ANZSCO coding system to ensure reporting of positions is accurate and consistent.

NOT STARTED

• This strategy is in the planning phase of implementation and is scheduled for delivery in 2025.