



Gender Equality Policy and Guidelines



Yarriambiack
SHIRE COUNCIL

Gender Equality Policy and Guidelines

Yarriambiack Shire Council encourages a working environment which promotes gender equality and models non-violent and respectful relationships.

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Chapter 1 – Gender Equality Policy

1. Objective

This policy and guidelines aim to promote, encourage, and facilitate gender equality and enhance the status of women. It seeks to identify and eliminate systemic causes of gender inequality in policies, programs, and service delivery within the workplace and community.

2. Responsibility

The Department of People and Culture is responsible for implementing the policy and guidelines.

This policy and guidelines apply to all employees including fulltime, part-time, casual or fixed term (including apprentices or trainees) employees of the Yarriambiack Shire Council (YSC).

3. Policy Statement and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to encourage YSC employees to take positive action towards achieving workplace gender equality and to promote gender equality in policies, programs and services.

This Policy and Guidelines covers:

- The gender equality principles;
- Indicators that must be addressed to gauge progress on achieving gender equity; and
- The procedures to provide a clear understanding of the Gender Equality Act 2020 reporting requirements in regards to the Gender Equality Action Plan.

4. Gender Equality Principles

YSC is committed to implementing initiatives and changing behaviours to support the following principles to increase gender equality:

- a) 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.
- b) Gender equality benefits all Victorians regardless of gender.
- c) Gender equality is a human right and precondition to social justice.
- d) Gender equality brings significant economic, social and health benefits for Victoria.
- e) Gender equality is a precondition for the prevention of family violence and other forms of violence against women and girls.
- f) Advancing gender equality is a shared responsibility across the Victorian community.
- g) All human beings, regardless of gender, should be free to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives being limited by gender stereotypes, gender roles or prejudices.
- h) 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.
- i) Women have historically experienced discrimination and disadvantage on the basis of sex and gender.
- j) Special measures may be necessary to achieve gender equality.

5. Gender Equality Indicators

YSC will utilise the following indicators to measure gender-related changes over a period of time:

Gender composition of all levels of the workforce and governing bodies such as Community Asset committees.

- a) Equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value across all levels of the workforce, irrespective of gender.
- b) Levels of sexual harassment in the workplace.
- c) Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace.
- d) Availability and utilisation of terms, conditions and practices relating to;
 - family violence leave;
 - flexible working arrangements; and
 - working arrangements supporting employees with family or caring responsibilities, gendered segregation within the workplace and any other prescribed matters.
- e) Levels of gendered segregation within the workplace.

6. Benefits of a Workplace Gender Equality Policy

A formal workplace Gender Equality Policy can assist an organisation to:

- a) Provide internal guidance on how the YSC aims to integrate a gender perspective and women's human rights throughout policy formation, program development and activity implementation.
- b) Provide both women and men access to equal opportunities and outcomes, including equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value.
- c) Remove barriers to the full and equal participation of women in the workforce.
- d) Provide full and genuine access to positions, including leadership roles for women and men.
- e) Eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender particularly in relation to family and caring responsibilities for both women and men.

Benefits of Gender Equality in the Workplace (Internal)	Benefits of Gender Equality (Economic, Social & Environmental)
- Improved productivity - Increased growth and innovation - Diversity of views - Flexible working arrangements - A more resilient and dependable workforce - Enhanced well-being and satisfaction for employees	- Gender equality reduces violence against women and girls - Positively impacts the economy - It fosters safer and healthier communities - Enhances personal freedom and fortifies family bonds - Reduces poverty

7. The Victorian Local Government Women's Charter and Gender Equality

Local Government of Victoria recognised the need for increased women's participation in the key decision making forums in the community and in democratic

governance, and therefore, on behalf of communities, support the following Local Government Women's Charter principles:

- Gender Equity
- Diversity
- Active Citizenship

7.1 Gender Equity

That women and men have an equal right to be representatives in local governments, committees and decision-making positions.

7.2 Diversity

The inclusion of different experiences and perspectives in local governments and community decision-making strengthens local democratic governance and helps build cohesive communities. Councils and communities encourage and welcome the participation of all women.

7.3 Active Citizenship

Local Governments will work with the community to increase the numbers and participation of women in public life, so that decision-making more clearly represents and reflects the interests and demographics of communities.

The Victorian Local Government Women's Charter principles and actions provide a lens through which to focus on women's involvement in local government decision-making and increasing opportunities for women's participation at all levels of civic life.

YSC became a signatory to the Victorian Local Governments Women's Charter in support of gender equality in 2011 and remains an active member.

8. Communities of Respect and Equality (CoRE) Alliance

YSC is a 'CoRE' Alliance member committed to the undertaking of action both internally and externally to promote gender equity, equality and prevention of violence against women.

As members, Council is provided access to resources such as Gender Lens Checklists to assist in program planning, including implementation and evaluation, and Gender Audit Tools for identifying 'opportunities' and 'areas for improvement'.

These tools have been made available to workplaces that support gender equality and to assist in the development of Gender Equality Action Plans to improve policies, programs and service delivery to communities.

9. References

Legislation

- *Gender Equality Act 2020*
- Gender Equality Regulations 2020
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- Human Rights Charter
- Victorian Local Government Women's Charter
- Victorian Human Rights and Responsibilities Charter 2006

Council Documents

- Gender Equality Action Plan
- Employee Code of Conduct

- Human Resources Policy and Guidelines Manual
- Information Privacy Policy

10. Definitions

TERM	DEFINITION
The Act	<i>Gender Equality Act 2020</i>
Commissioner	The Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner appointed under section 29 of the Act.
Communities of Respect and Equality (CoRE) Alliance	Communities of Respect and Equality (CoRE) Alliance is a partnership of organisations, businesses, clubs and groups who share a vision for safe, equal and respectful communities in the Grampians region.
Gender Equality	Means equality of rights, opportunities, responsibilities and outcomes between persons of different genders e.g. women, men and transgender.
Gender Equity	Means fairness of treatment of women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different, but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations, and opportunities.
Gender Equality Action Plan	A Gender Equality Action Plan referred to in Section 10 of the Act, and includes a report or document taken to be a Gender Equality Action Plan under section 13 of the Act.
Gender Equality Action Plan Reporting Year	Means the following: • 2021 • Each subsequent 4th year
Gender Lens	A tool used to intentionally examine and highlight issues of gender.
Gender Stereotypes	Simplistic generalisations about the gender attributes, differences and roles.
Targets	Targets (objectives set) relating to the workplace gender equality indicators.
Trans and Gender Diverse	Transgender (often shortened to 'trans') refers to a person whose gender identity, gender expression or behaviour does not align with their sex assigned at birth.
Quotas	Quotas relating to the workplace gender equality indicators
YSC	Yarriambiack Shire Council

11. Consistency with Governance Principles Local Government Act 2020

Governance Principle	Section of policy where covered
a) Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law;	Section 13
b) priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations;	Section 1
c) the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted;	Section 6
d) the municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making;	Section 1
e) innovation and continuous improvement is to be pursued;	Section 1 and 3
f) collaboration with other Councils and Governments and statutory bodies is to be sought;	Section 3
g) the ongoing financial viability of the Council is to be ensured;	Section 3
h) regional, state and national plans and policies are to be taken into account in strategic planning and decision making;	Section 1
i) the transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.	Section 3

In giving effect to the overarching governance principles, a Council must take into account the following supporting principles—

- (a) the community engagement principles;
- (b) the public transparency principles;
- (c) the strategic planning principles;
- (d) the financial management principles;
- (e) the service performance principles.

12. Policy Review

This policy, along with its associated procedures, will be reviewed every four years. This allows us to update the dates for progress, reporting, and Gender Equality Action Plan, ensuring we adhere to the established timelines.

13. Legislative Context

The *Gender Equality Act 2020* was enacted on 25 February 2020. The Act aims to improve workplace gender equality across the Victorian public sector, universities and local councils.

To comply with the requirements of the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, Council must take positive action towards achieving workplace gender equality and promote gender equality in their policies, programs and services. This policy has been developed to support these efforts.

Council Approved Policy

Policy Adopted:	Ordinary Meeting 21 October 2020	Minute Book Page 164 Item 12.9
Policy Reviewed:	Ordinary Meeting 27 August 2025	Minute Book Page [number]

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Chapter 2 - Gender Equality Guidelines

14. Objective

Council must consider, promote, and take necessary and proportionate action towards achieving gender equality when developing policies, programs, and delivering services to the public, especially those with a direct and significant impact on the community.

15. Responsibility

Council's Extended Leadership Team (including CEO, Senior Officers, Managers, Supervisors, Coordinators and Business Leads) are responsible for the implementation and action of procedures to ensure compliance, reporting and timelines are met.

16. Method

The following steps outline the processes required by YSC to meet the compliance of the *Gender Equality Act 2020*.

16.1 Step 1- Gender Equality Impact Assessment

YSC must undertake a gender impact assessment when developing or reviewing any policy, program or service that has a direct and significant impact on the public.

The assessment must incorporate the process and format used to undertake the impact assessment and include the following:

- a) Assess the effects that the policy, program or service may have on persons of different genders; and
- b) State how the policy, program or service will be developed or varied in order to:
 - Meet the needs of persons of different genders;
 - Address gender inequality; and
 - Promote gender equality.
- c) If practicable, take into account that gender inequality may be compounded by disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience on the basis of any of the following:
 - Aboriginality;
 - Age;
 - Disability;
 - Ethnicity;
 - Gender identity;
 - Race;
 - Religion; and
 - Sexual orientation.

16.2 Step 2 - Workplace Gender Equality Audit

YSC must undertake a workplace gender audit before developing a Gender Equality Action Plan. The audit must assess the state and nature of gender inequality as at 30 June in the Gender Equality Action Plan reporting year to which the audit relates, having regard to the following:

- a) Workplace 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 in the workplace.
 - Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace.
 - Availability and utilisation of terms, conditions and practices relating to:
 - Family violence leave;
 - Flexible working arrangements; and
 - Working arrangements supporting employees with family or caring responsibilities.
 - Gendered segregation within the workplace.
 - Any other prescribed matters.
- b) Any gender equality targets or gender equality quotas set.
- c) The disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience on the basis of any of the following in addition to gender inequality:
- Aboriginality;
 - Age;
 - Disability;
 - Ethnicity;
 - Gender identity;
 - Race;
 - Religion;
 - Sexual orientation;
- d) Any other matters that the YSC considers relevant.
- e) Required to incorporate the process and format used to undertake the audit.
- f) Gender-disaggregated data.
- g) If available, data about Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion and sexual orientation.

The following factors must be taken into account in determining whether Council has made reasonable and material progress in relation to the above Gender Equality Indicators:

- a) The size of Council including the number of employees.
- b) The nature and circumstances of Council, including any barriers to making progress.
- c) Requirements that apply to Council under any other Act.
- d) Council's resources.
- e) Council's operational priorities and competing operational obligations.
- f) The practicability and cost to Council of making progress.
- g) Genuine attempts made by Council to make progress.

16.3 Step 3 - Preparing a Gender Equality Action Plan

In preparing the YSC Gender Equality Action Plan, Council must consider the gender equality principles and consult with Councillors, employees, and other relevant stakeholders

The YSC Leadership Team must prepare and include the following:

- a) Results of the workplace gender audit.
- b) Strategies (actions) and measures for promoting and improving gender equality.

YSC must ensure sufficient resources are allocated for the development and implementation of the Gender Equality Action Plan.

16.4 Step 4 - Publication and Submission of Plan

YSC must submit a Gender Equality Action Plan to the Commissioner on or before the 01 May in each Gender Equality Action Plan reporting year.

Within a reasonable time after submitting the Gender Equality Action Plan Council must publish the plan on its website and notify Council and employees.

The Gender Equality Action Plan is only accepted if the following criteria is met and the Commission is satisfied:

- a) The report or document includes the matters set out in step 3.
- b) The report or document has been prepared no more than 12 months before the start of the Gender Equality Action Plan reporting year.
- c) The Gender Equality Action Plan has been published on Council's website and Council and employees have been notified of the publication.

If the Gender Equality Action Plan requires an amendment, the plan must be resubmitted to the Commissioner. Additionally, the amended plan must be published on Council's website, and both Council and employees must be notified.

16.5 Step 5 – Gender Equality Progress Reports

Council must submit a progress report to the Commissioner on or before 31 October in every second year after submitting a Gender Equality Action Plan.

The progress report must:

- a) In relation to any gender impact assessment undertaken by Council within the relevant period-
 - Identify the policy, program or service that was the subject of the assessment and report on:
 - How the policy, program or service was varied in order to meet the needs of different genders.
 - How it addressed gender inequality
 - How it promoted gender equality.
- b) Report on Council's progress within the relevant period in relation to the strategies and measures set out in the Gender Equality Action Plan.
- c) Demonstrate Council's progress within the relevant period in relation to the workplace gender equality indicators and meeting of gender equality targets and/or quotas.

**Council must not identify or report on a policy, program or service that includes information that would be an exempt document under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 or any other provision of another enactment or relating to confidential information.*

17. Compliance

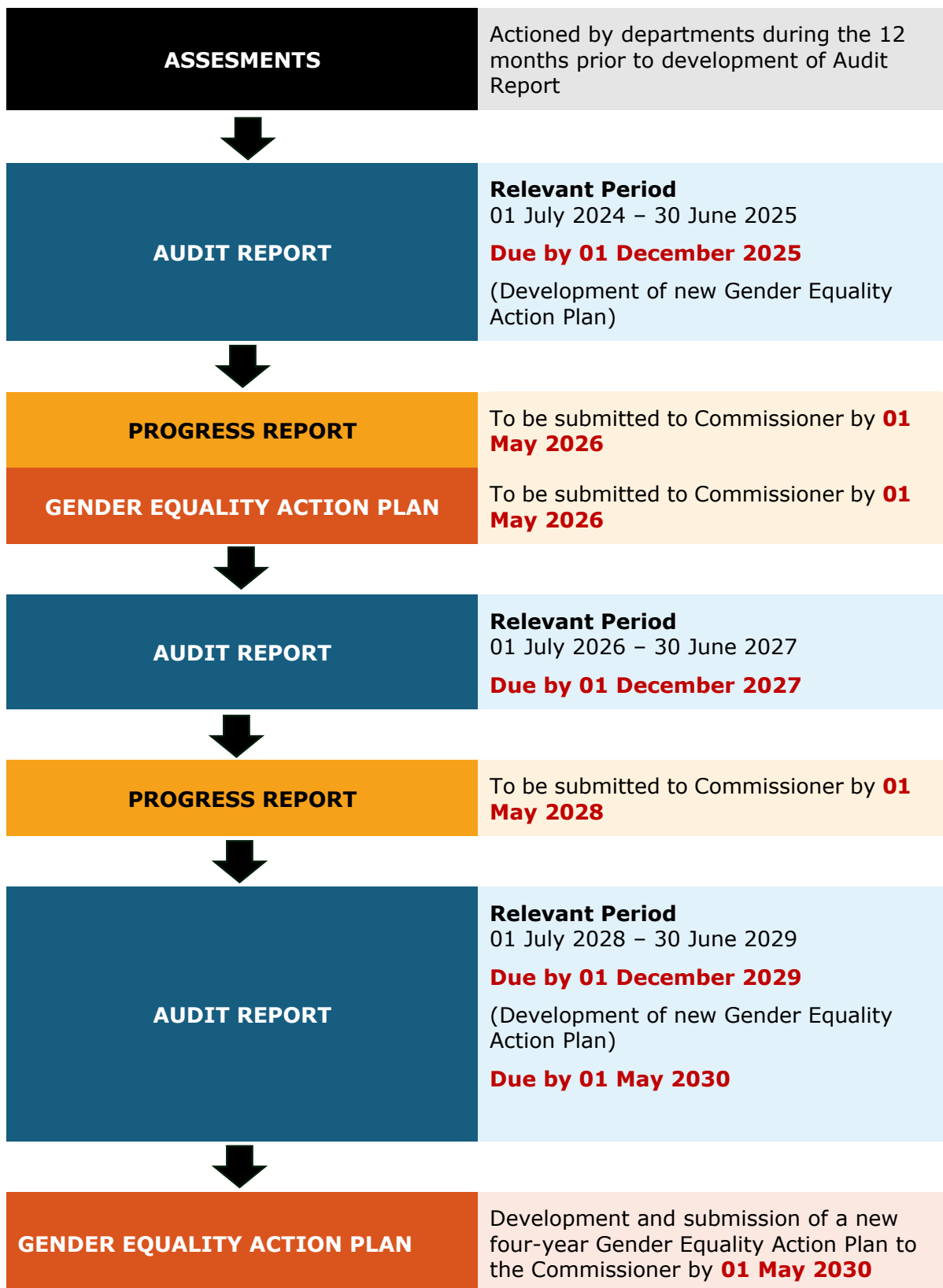
The Commission may issue a compliance notice to Council if the Commission reasonably believes that Council has failed to comply with the Act by:

- a) Not preparing a Gender Equality Action Plan in accordance with this Act; or
- b) Not submitting a Gender Equality Action Plan within the time required by section 12; or
- c) Not preparing a progress report in accordance with this Act; or
- d) Not submitting a progress report within the time required by section 19; or
- e) Not making reasonable and material progress in relation to the workplace gender equality indicators; or
- f) Not making reasonable and material progress towards meeting gender equality targets; or
- g) Not making reasonable and material progress towards meeting gender equality quotas.

Council must comply with a compliance notice.

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18. Flowchart and Timelines





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