



Gender Equality Action Plan 2021–25



Acknowledgement of Country

This document was written on the land of the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. Victoria Legal Aid acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands across Victoria and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We recognise their continuing connection to country, culture and identity and the importance of self-determination for creating better futures for First Nations people.

About Victoria Legal Aid

Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) is an independent statutory authority established under the *Legal Aid Act 1978 (Vic)*. It is funded by both Commonwealth and Victorian governments but operates independently of government. VLA provides legal representation to those who need it most, and provides legal information, legal advice, and education with a focus on prevention and early resolution of legal problems. VLA also works to address the barriers that prevent people from accessing the justice system by participating in reforms and ensuring government agencies are held to account. VLA has 15 offices across metropolitan and regional Victoria.

Our Gender Equality Action Plan is subject to change following feedback from the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector.

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Chairperson and CEO message



We are pleased to present Victoria Legal Aid's first Gender Equality Action Plan 2021–25 (GEAP) to you.

VLA believes in equal participation by all people in our community. As a large provider of legal and non-legal services in Victoria we have a responsibility to address barriers and challenges that restrict the access of many Victorians to the justice system.

This plan forms part of our response to the *Gender Equality Act 2020* (Vic). It has been prepared following the results of our Workplace Gender Audit conducted in June 2021 and in consultation with our staff, with our staff Health and Safety Representatives and the Community and Public Sector Union and staff delegates. It contains actions and measures for VLA to improve gender equality over the next four years and to ensure that staff of all genders feel safe, visible and included in our workplace.

At the end of 2023, we will report to the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector (CGEPS) on progress against this plan, and again in 2025, noting that the GEAP is a living document, supported by strong governance and will be updated to accommodate evolving needs.

VLA's workforce has 76% of staff identifying as women and 24% as men according to our HR system.

In April 2021 we conducted our second Gender, Diversity and Inclusion survey, and the data provided by the 58% of staff who responded to the survey tell a slightly different story. Of the 17% of those staff in the survey who identified as LGBTIQ+, 0.8% or 4 people, identified as trans and gender diverse. This survey data was not consistent with the data in our HR system at the time that our GEAP audit was run and therefore, it has been difficult to report on their experience as a group, despite our knowledge that trans and gender diverse staff have a strong desire to be acknowledged in our data and GEAP report. VLA is committed to ensuring that all staff can correctly identify their gender identity in our HR systems so that our future gender audits and workplace reports will provide greater visibility of

the gender composition of our workforce. We will do this whilst also being mindful to maintain data privacy and confidentiality for staff where numbers reported are very small and they do not wish their data to be reported.

Our 2021–25 GEAP includes a commitment to provide support, remove barriers and promote the employment of women, trans and gender diverse staff. Our GEAP will help us to identify and determine changes we need to make to our gender composition at certain classification levels of our workforce. For example, it will help us find out more about the diverse backgrounds of our Board. We will find out ways to improve our gender pay gap. We will determine how best to support our senior women from diverse backgrounds, trans and gender diverse people and LGBTIQ+ people with career progression into leadership roles. We will promote our extensive flexible workplace arrangements, including for example, access to primary carers' leave arrangements to men.

We are excited to start implementing the plan and achieve greater gender equality for all.

Robbie Campo, Acting Chairperson
Louise Glanville, Chief Executive Officer

Overview

Legislative context

The *Gender Equality Act 2020* (Victoria) (the Act) sets out the obligations of defined statutory entities to produce a Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP). This is our first GEAP developed in line with the new Victorian legislation.

Under the Act we are required to:

- develop and implement a GEAP every four years, which includes:
 - results of a workplace gender audit (WGA)
 - strategies for achieving workplace gender equality
- publicly report on our progress in relation to workplace gender equality every two years
- promote gender equality in our workplace, policies, programs, and services
- complete gender impact assessments when developing or reviewing policies and programs, and when services that have a direct and significant impact on the public.

For the WGA we considered data relating to the following gender indicators under the Act:

- gender composition of all levels of the workforce
- gender composition of the governing body
- 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, flexible work arrangements and working arrangements for those with family and caring responsibilities
- gendered segregation within the workplace.

In line with our obligations under the Act, we used the results of the WGA to inform consultations with staff, the Board, the Community and Public Sector Union, and these consultation findings informed the development of our first GEAP. Further information on our consultation approach is included in a later section of this plan.

Principles of the *Gender Equality Act 2020* (Vic)

The strategies and measures within the Gender Equality Action Plan 2021–25 are informed by the gender equality principles outlined in section 6 of the Act. Those principles are:

1. That 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 based on Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation, and other attributes
9. Women have historically experienced discrimination and disadvantage on the basis of sex and gender
10. Special measures may be necessary to achieve gender equality.

These principles are reflected below in the table of VLA's strategies and measures. We note that while the Act does provide an expansive definition of gender, the legislation is binary in nature and VLA wishes to work towards change beyond a binary approach.

Gender Pay Equity Principles

Strategies and measures that relate to gender pay equity are informed by the gender pay equity principles outlined in the *Gender Equality Regulations 2020*. These principles include:

1. Equal pay for work of equal or comparable value, which refers to work valued as equal or comparable in terms of skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions, including different types of work;
2. Employment and pay practices are free from bias and discrimination, including the effects of unconscious bias and assumptions based on gender;
3. Employment and pay practices, pay rates and systems are transparent and information about these matters is readily accessible and understandable;
4. Employment and pay practices recognise and account for different patterns of labour force participation by employees who undertake unpaid or caring work;
5. Interventions and solutions are collectively developed and agreed to, sustainable and enduring;
6. Employees, unions, and employers work collaboratively to achieve mutually agreed outcomes.

In developing this plan, we also had regard to other relevant legislation and industrial instruments including the:

- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)* and,
- VLA's Enterprise Agreement 2020-24.

Strategic alignment

The GEAP is aligned with our *Outcomes Framework 2022-32* and our *Strategic Plan 2026* as follows:

- Outcome 5 - Effective and sustainable VLA; in particular, 5.3 VLA is a safe, inclusive, and equitable organisation, with diverse and skilled staff
- Strategy 26 - Priority for VLA staff and ways of working: We will invest in our people and work in a safe, inclusive, equitable way that involves people with lived experience.

The GEAP is a key element of our Inclusion Framework, which also comprises the strategies and plans cited below:

- Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP2) 2019-22
- Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020-23
- Cultural Diversity and Anti-Racism Action Plan
- Disability Action Plan 2022-25
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Learning Strategy 2020-25
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy 2020-25
- Client First Strategy 2020-23

Delivering against the GEAP and other plans and strategies will enable an improved understanding of the intersectionality of experience between women, men and trans and gender diverse staff and other lived experiences, including disability, age, being First Nations, culturally diverse and/or LGBTIQ+ community among our workforce and influence our employment policies and practices so that all staff feel safe and supported at work.

We will measure our progress and provide regular reporting to the proposed VLA Gender Equality Committee, our Board and Executive Management Group, and the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector (CGEPS).

Note on gender-inclusive language

VLA seeks to be inclusive of all staff. This document recognises that gender categories should not be limited to the male-female binary and must include trans and gender diverse people, and people who do not identify with any gender.

We acknowledge that specific limitations within the legislation, in our own consultation processes, along with our payroll system that is 'hardcoded' with outdated language, have been barriers to staff self-reporting and led to the erasure of trans and gender diverse staff in the earlier drafts of our GEAP. We strongly support the objectives of the Act, and we propose to work with our trans and gender diverse staff to improve the various limitations to strengthen future GEAPs. We will also provide feedback on our workforce and organisational experiences of developing our first GEAP to the CGEPS.

Acknowledgment of intersectional gender equality and diversity at VLA

VLA recognises that gender equality is necessary for achieving equality for all. People face unfair treatment because of their sex and gender identity based on gender stereotypes. Women face more sexual harassment and discrimination than men in the workplace. This leads to unfair gaps in terms of pay, promotion, and employment opportunities. Other forms of discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender diversity, sexual orientation, disability, and age can also impact women's experience of gender equality and negatively impact them in the workplace.

VLA recognises that the diversity of genders within our staff cohort includes people who identify as men, women, trans and gender diverse. We know that trans and gender diverse staff may choose to hide their identity at work in fear of discrimination and that trans and gender diverse people are more likely to be discriminated against and experience unfair treatment in the workplace.

We are committed to working with all our staff networks to consider better ways to capture payroll and experience survey data from trans and gender diverse staff, staff with disability, and staff from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. We acknowledge our HR system language for self-identification is not using currently accepted language. We also need to ensure our GEAP actions improve our workplace culture, so all staff feel visible, safe, and supported.

VLA is committed to achieving intersectional gender equality within our organisation through the implementation of our strategies and measures which have come out of the findings of the 2021 workplace audit. We acknowledge greater awareness, support and focus is required to improve intersectional gender equality for the most disadvantaged women and trans and gender diverse people at VLA.

Our case for change

Our vision

Victoria Legal Aid is committed to establishing a gender equitable, safe, inclusive, and respectful workplace for all staff, and to ensuring our services contribute to equitable access to legal assistance for our clients and the Victorian community.

Diversity and lived experience

We acknowledge, respect, and value gender diversity. We will listen to people's lived experience of gender discrimination and disadvantage to help drive change across the Victorian justice and social system and promote cultural and attitudinal change in the broader community towards women and people who are trans and gender diverse.

We celebrate the contribution that all people bring to our organisation through shared experiences and views. We acknowledge intersectionality and recognise that the lived experiences of our staff from a variety of gender diverse, cultural backgrounds, faiths and traditions brings richness to our organisation and to the Victorian community.

Our values

Fairness: We are committed to fairness in our society and to facilitating fair and equitable access to legal support.

Care: We care about our clients and the community and the importance of approaching our work informed by the effects of trauma or discrimination, learning from people affected about what matters most and treating each other with kindness and respect.

Courage: We strongly and confidently approach our work to uphold our values and what matters for individuals, systems, and organisations.

Inclusion: We work to provide an inclusive environment for clients, staff, and referral partners.

Our organisation's history of working towards gender equality

Since 2017, we hosted our inaugural International Women's Day (IWD) event and presented the results of our gender pay gap analysis. This commenced an organisational conversation on Yammer about actions VLA could take to address key issues such as equal pay for equal work, encouraging women who worked part time to apply for promotions and supporting men to take up parental/caring responsibilities and flexible work arrangements.

We set up a Gender Equality staff working group in 2021 to advise on the development of our first GEAP, sponsored by a member of the Executive team, and committed to continuing to report annually on the gender pay gap, gender composition and salary commencement data for IWD. We have been able to track and report on these key areas since 2017 and these have continued to be part of the IWD staff events and conversations.

We provide legal services to members of the community experiencing gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment through our Equality Law Program. We also support initiatives for gender equality in the legal assistance sector, through our new Equitable Briefing Strategy and in our advocacy for law and systems reform. In 2020–21, we advocated for law reform to end sexual harassment at work. In March 2022 we endorsed the joint statement of the Power2Prevent coalition and made a submission to the federal Attorney-General's department on implementing the remaining recommendations in the Respect@Work report. A full list of our public submissions is on our library website <https://library.vla.vic.gov.au>

As a major statutory legal assistance organisation, and as part of our response to the *Gender Equality Act 2020* requirements to conduct Gender Impact Assessments (on new and reviewed services, policies and programs that have a 'direct and significant' impact on the public), we are looking at how we can improve our gender-responsive practice in our service design, implementation, and evaluation of our work for our clients who are seeking and using our legal and non-legal services and information.

Our Workplace Gender Audit findings – what we know about gender equality at VLA

We welcomed the opportunity to conduct our first Workplace Gender Audit (WGA) under the Act as at 30 June 2021, utilising data, and information from our various HR systems.

The audit highlighted gaps in our data such as the outdated self-identification options in our systems for trans and gender diverse staff, which we intend to address so we can have more accurate and comprehensive data sets for future audits and track our progress in achieving gender equality.

Conducting this audit gave us an opportunity to consider how we can foster an environment for staff to feel culturally safe and comfortable to disclose relevant personal information. There are a wide range of reasons why staff may not feel comfortable to share certain information. We plan to work with our staff diversity networks to determine the best way to provide an environment in which they feel safe to disclose the information.

Our ability to apply an intersectional lens to our analysis in earlier versions of the GEAP was limited by our desire to protect the privacy of a small number of staff members who may have been identified without their consent. However, we need to continue to balance the competing needs of data privacy and disclosure and question how to do this in a safe way so trans and gender diverse staff and other small diverse cohorts of staff are visible. Disclosure with appropriate consent under certain circumstances may assist in achieving greater visibility and recognition and fulfil the aims of gender equality.

We combined the workforce data with that collected through our employee experience surveys: the Gender, Diversity, and Inclusion Survey (GD&I) conducted in

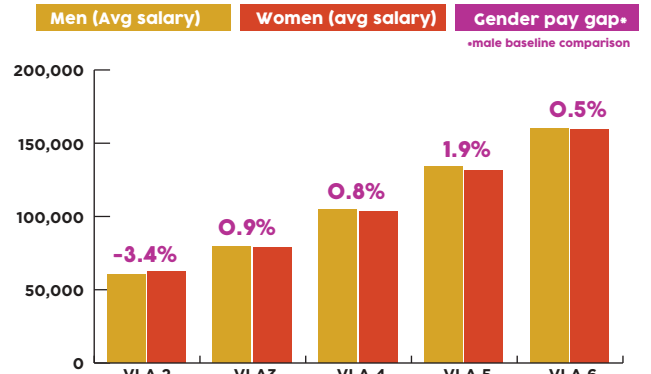
Workplace Gender Audit findings as at 30 June 2021



On 30 June 2021 in our payroll system, **75%** of staff who identified as women occupied leadership roles across all levels

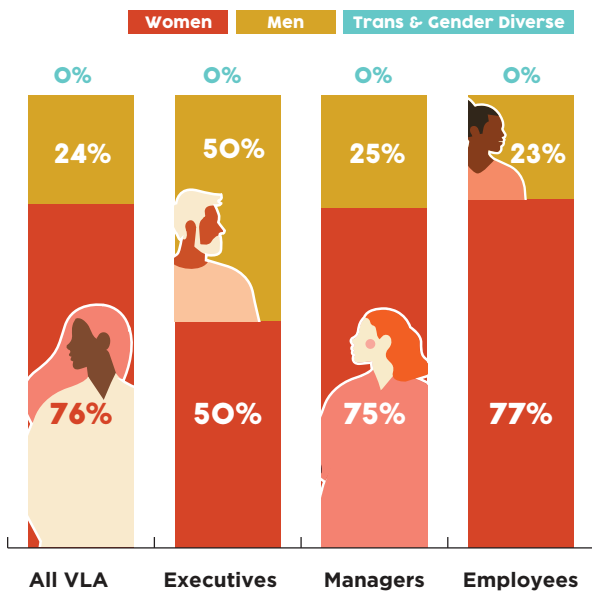
Gender pay gaps across classification levels across VLA as at 30 June 2021**

The GPG is derived as the difference between women's & men's average weekly full-time equivalent earnings, expressed as a percentage of men's earnings

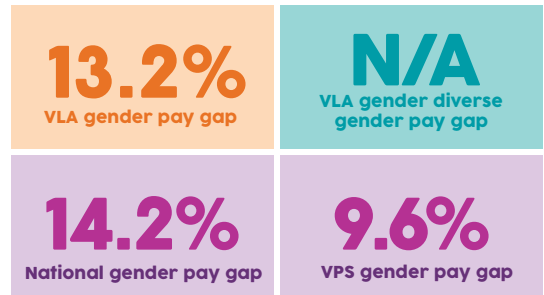


**Trans & gender diverse pay gap not available

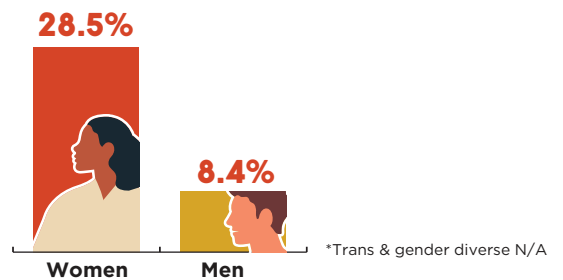
Gender breakdown of people in roles at different levels in the organisation as at 30 June 2021



Gender pay gap

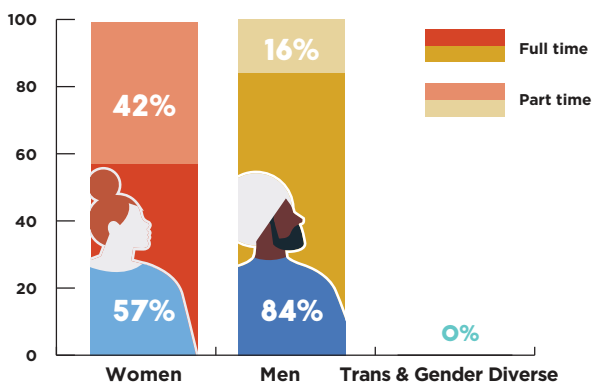


Carers leave taken as at 30 June 2021*

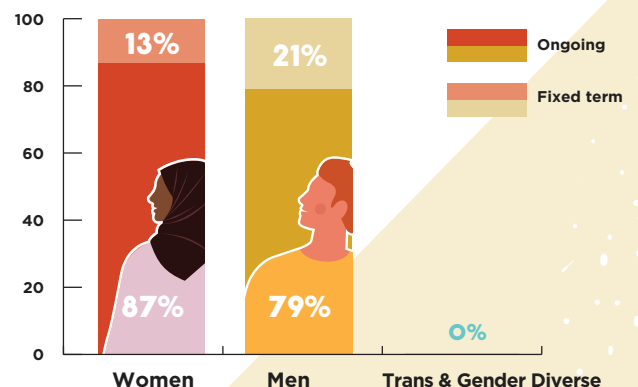


Gender composition by employment basis as at 30 June 2021

Full time vs Part time



Ongoing vs Fixed term



This payroll data did not include trans & gender diverse staff. As at 30 June 2021, there were no staff who identified as trans & gender diverse in our payroll system on that date.

March 2021; the Victorian Public Sector Commission (VPSC) People Matter Survey (PMS) 2021 and the 3 internal “Pulse” Surveys conducted during the 2020–21 period. This data provides the baseline for our WGA results which was submitted to the CGEPS on 1 December 2021 and is summarised on the previous page.

NB. Given the gender descriptors in our payroll system are based on Commonwealth legislation which is (male, female, and x – i.e. indeterminate, intersex, unspecified), and that some staff may not feel safe to self-identify in our organisation, there was no data available in our payroll system for trans and gender diverse staff at the time the data was extracted, even though trans and gender diverse staff may have been working at VLA on 30 June 2021. We undertake to collect data from trans and gender diverse staff through a survey if our payroll system cannot be updated for the next audit report.

Gender equality indicator 1 - Gender composition of our workforce

On 30 June 2021, our workforce data indicated our organisation had a total workforce of 926 employees, which is predominantly women with 704 (76%) women, 219 (24%) men and no-one who identified as trans or gender diverse across all VLA classification levels. At the executive level, the gender composition was an even number between women and men with no trans or gender diverse people.

As with all organisations, VLA experiences staff movements both internally and externally, which means that our workforce composition is fluid. Our audit report reflects what was in our payroll system on 30 June 2021 and does not reflect what we know from subsequent data analysis, and from our GD&I survey (conducted in April 2021), and now, at the time of drafting this plan.

VLA’s payroll system uses gender descriptors that are considered outdated by trans and gender diverse staff. These descriptors have been established by the payroll system provider to comply with Commonwealth legislation and are used for government reporting purposes across the public sector. We acknowledge feedback from members of our Pride Network during

consultation, that these descriptors are barriers to trans and gender diverse staff being formally recognised in our gender composition reporting and that this omission has caused harm and distress to this group of staff in the process of preparing this GEAP.

Changes since we conducted our audit

It should be noted that after the completion of the WGA in June 2021, the gender composition in our payroll system at VLA changed, and as at February 2022 we had 2 staff (0.2%) identify as transgender. Our gender distribution at the executive level also changed from June 2021, with women now holding 55% of the executive roles, with creation of a new executive role. VLA 2 level roles continue to be predominantly held by women (92%). This high percentage of women in the lower classification levels, impacts the overall gender composition across VLA. The distribution of staff by gender reduces in the higher classification levels (see below under Indicator 3).

Gender equality indicator 2 - Gender composition of our Board

When we conducted the WGA, the gender composition of our Board was 43% women and 57% men and 0% identified as trans or gender diverse. At this stage there is no intersectional data available on our Board other than gender.

Gender equality indicator 3 - Equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value across all levels of the workforce irrespective of gender

The gender pay gap measures the difference between the average earnings of women and men and the average earnings of men and trans and gender diverse people in the workforce. It is not the difference between people being paid differently for the work of the same or comparable value based on gender which is unlawful. That is equal pay.

VLA reports to our workforce annually on the overall gender pay gap by VLA classification level, as part of our commitment to address gender equality. This report, presented since 2017, coincides with *International Women's Day* celebrations in March each year. We have seen an improvement in equal pay for equal work in commencement salaries during that time.

Several points to note about the gender pay gap are:

- In 2020–21, the VLA gender pay gap based on the median base salary was 13.2%¹
- The National pay gap, based on average weekly earnings, is reported by WGEA as 14.2%²
- The Victorian public sector pay gap based on the median base salary is 9.6.%³
- Of the VLA classification levels on 30 June 2021, the pay variance between women and men is most significant at the VLA 5 level (-1.9%)
- On the day, the data was analysed for the WGA, there were no staff in our payroll system who identified as trans or gender diverse
- The number of women employed at a VLA 2 level on 30 June 2021 was 92% however, the proportion of women reduced at senior levels e.g., women made up 60% of VLA 6 staff and 50% of the executive.

Gender equality indicator 4 - Sexual harassment in the workplace

The collection of data on sexual harassment is limited due in some part to the complex and confidential nature of these types of cases and the absence of a more robust and accessible reporting system.

There were 7 reports of sexual harassment in the reporting period between June 2020 and June 2021. Of these:

- All reports were identified as women
- All alleged perpetrators were men
- Two reports were made by bystanders who are women

- Four alleged perpetrators were men in a position of power, either an immediate supervisor or a senior manager
- One alleged perpetrator was external to VLA.

Employee survey data reveals that 11% of respondents had experienced sexual harassment in worksites that are external to VLA (courts, tribunals, or hospitals). The experience of sexual harassment increases for staff who identify as a person from a diversity group as shown in the infographic on page 7 (GD&I survey results April 2021).

While the GD&I survey did not specifically ask whether these experiences occurred in the 2020–21 period, future surveys will ask for staff to report their experiences in the previous twelve months. This data remains useful as it provides VLA with a baseline from which to measure the impact of interventions and changes that are implemented over the coming twelve months.

Gender equality indicator 5 - Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace

During 2020–21:

- We recruited 149 people, 75% (111) women and 25% (38) men
- We did not have data for the recruitment or promotion of trans and gender diverse staff during this period
- Adopting the Commission's classification model, new appointments to the roles of Sub-directors and Managers were 50% women and 50% men, however 85% of new supervisors employed were women
- We employed seven Aboriginal staff
- During the reporting period, 52 people received a permanent promotion at VLA, of which 87% (45) were women and 13.4% (7) were men.

1 WGEA Data Explorer

2 Australia's Gender Pay Gap Statistics | WGEA

3 Employee pay and gender pay - Victorian Public Sector Commission (vpssc.vic.gov.au). Note the distinction between the wider Victorian public sector and the Victorian Public Services (VPS)

VLA provides a range of learning and development opportunities for staff to progress their career.

Our data during the 2020–21 reporting period shows:

- 348 employees were provided with targeted training to develop their careers, of which 78% (271) were women and 22% (77) were men
- 67 legal staff participated in *legal specialisation* training and *advocacy* training, of which 82% were women
- 250 staff participated in manager capability development and career development programs, of which 77% were women
- The survey data showed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and LGBTIQ+ staff were exposed to more professional development opportunities than other staff, while those with a disability reported the least access to development opportunities
- 77% of respondents to PMS agreed that they were developing and learning in their role and 59% agreed they were 'satisfied with the way my learning and development needs have been addressed in the last 12 months'
- 58% of respondents to GD&I survey indicated that all staff, regardless of diversity cohort felt comfortable discussing career aspirations with their managers
- 27% of our GD&I survey respondents said that they had a disability (around 150 staff) and of those, 62% said they had not disclosed their disability to VLA, almost half (46%) nominating concerns about career impact.

Gender equality indicator 6 - Availability and utilisation of terms, conditions and practices relating to family leave, flexible working arrangements and working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities

VLA has a range of Enterprise Agreement ⁴ and workplace policy provisions which support flexibility across our workforce. They include provisions such as:

- Individual Flexibility Arrangements to vary the Ordinary Hours of Work
- Part-time employment
- Purchased leave
- Flexitime (including access to excessive flexi leave)
- Parental Leave including primary, secondary paid and unpaid leave
- Surrogacy leave
- Foster and kinship care leave, which includes Aboriginal kinship care
- Family violence leave
- Gender transition leave ⁵

Employee survey data suggests that these have been well utilised during 2020–21 and staff feel supported to access these. Our Pulse survey data reported that 82% (530 people) agreed that 'the person I report to supports my efforts to balance my work and personal life.'

The data available for this indicator relates to arrangements which are formally recorded in the payroll system only and does not capture arrangements that may be made at a local level.

⁴ VLA Enterprise Agreement 2022-24

⁵ This leave type is new and was not available in the reporting period for the WGA

For the reporting period 2021–22:

- 315 (44.5%) women had flexible work arrangements in place, in comparison to 37 (17%) men. 54 women in the category of “Supervisor” to “CEO” level, have formal flexible work arrangements in place. There are 2 males in these categories who have formal flexible work arrangements. There was no data available from our payroll system about trans and gender diverse staff on flexible work arrangements.
- 33 women commenced parental leave, taking on average 16 weeks paid parental leave and 25 weeks unpaid leave. There was no data available in our system on parental leave for trans and gender diverse staff
- We introduced new parental leave provisions in our Enterprise Agreement facilitating the secondary caregiver (typically a male staff member), to become a primary caregiver and access an additional 12-weeks parental leave
- 10 staff accessed family violence leave. All staff were women
- 264 (37%) women have accessed carers leave in comparison to 78 (35%) men. There was no data available from our payroll system about carer’s leave for trans and gender diverse staff

Gender equality indicator 7 - Gendered segregation in the workplace

VLA has provided data in accordance with the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO). We note that given VLA’s size, composition, and the fact that we are a legal services organisation, it is difficult for VLA to draw meaningful conclusions from this ANZSCO codes for our organisation.

Key insights from applying an intersectional analysis of gender inequality

The lack of detailed demographic data stored in our payroll system has meant that it was difficult to analyse inequality with any lens other than gender.

We have however considered the various employee experiences surveys in addition to the data produced directly in response to the gender auditing process and through our staff consultations to develop this GEAP.

As noted, we conducted the VLA-tailored gender, diversity and inclusion (GD&I) survey of staff in March 2021 (519 of 899 staff or 58% of staff participated) and this was analysed in terms of qualitative and quantitative data. In addition, three short Pulse surveys were conducted during the auditing period, and these asked questions about flexible working practices and career support with a gender-based lens. The People Matter Survey (PMS) 2021 responses were also analysed.

We have been tracking the experience of diverse staff cohorts since 2018 when we conducted our first GD&I survey. We have developed specific action plans to help foster a more inclusive culture in response to survey findings and diversity network feedback. We know from our GD&I and PMS survey results that cohorts of staff reported differently to specific survey questions around cultural safety, incident reporting, recruitment advancement, retention, and recognition.

We have also noticed an increase in demographic reporting in our surveys and intend to work with the diversity networks to promote greater awareness of payroll reporting so that our data sets are more consistent with each other and able to be tracked for future reports. For example, we know from the 2021 GD&I survey that 3% of our staff identify as First Nations, 17% identify as LGBTIQ+ and 0.8% as trans and gender diverse, 27% identify as having disability or mental health issue, and 32% are from culturally diverse backgrounds however, this data is not available in our payroll system. We need to ensure staff confidence about the privacy and confidentiality of this information by providing clear information about why we want staff to record intersectional data in our payroll system.

Our survey results and staff feedback in our consultations highlight that we must address the compounding disadvantage and discrimination based on being First Nations, trans and gender diverse, older, a person with a disability, from a diverse ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, or other attribute, even though the experience data was not broken down further based on gender to provide us with detailed intersectional information.

We know for example from our GD&I survey that the perceptions or experiences of many staff are that:

- VLA needs to do more to improve policies and reporting processes and build trust and confidence that concerns raised will be managed appropriately
- staff are not sufficiently aware of their options to report discriminatory behaviours and actions
- that reporting discrimination, harassment and racism could affect their career prospects (43% of people of colour who responded in GD&I) or that they would not be believed (38% of LGBTIQ+ staff who responded)
- advising VLA about your disability or mental health issue could affect or stall your career progression (46% of staff with disability or mental health issues who responded in GD&I)
- VLA could do more to improve recruitment practices to make them more equitable and proactively encourage recruitment of people from diverse backgrounds
- the leadership groups at VLA are not perceived as diverse.

Although most staff would recommend VLA as an employer of choice to their friends, family, and community (65% of staff surveyed in the GD&I), there was a high variance on this question for staff who identified as having a mental illness or disability (52% answered favourably).

These results have informed a number of priority actions already included in our various Inclusion Framework strategies and plans. Where actions are already underway in other plans and strategies, we have indicated this, so it is clear they are already planned or underway.

Other information sources or data that were considered as part of GEAP development

In 2021 we commissioned a review into our Respectful Workplace Behaviour (RWB) policy framework by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC), with particular focus on our sexual harassment policies and experience. VEOHRC's findings have been accepted and have informed the 2021–22 People and Culture program of work. These findings were also incorporated into our consultation approach and informed the development of our GEAP actions.

Our exit interview process and records were reviewed. They did not yield any meaningful data for the auditing period and confirmed that the exit survey process required a significant overhaul to ensure it enables issues to be effectively identified as well as provide useful data for future audits.

Data gaps and our plans for building data collection

In conducting our WGA, we identified data gaps and limitations relating to the information held in the various systems such as the intersectional data in our payroll system or the reporting requirements relating to **WGA Indicator 4**, sexual harassment.

Where there was limited data available, VLA were unable to meet the reporting requirements. The issue of low self-reporting and disclosure was discussed during staff consultation sessions and has been used to shape actions directed to improving trust and confidence in the data systems and to improve our reporting systems.

There are also limitations with our staff experience surveys. In the reporting period we conducted our GD&I survey, three COVID-related Pulse surveys and participated in the VPSC PMS. Staff therefore were asked to participate in five surveys in the reporting period, with different purposes for each survey, and nuanced framing for similar questions. It is noted also that although our surveys attracted quite different participation rates⁶ the experience reported across all surveys was generally consistent. It is intended that the PMS will be used as a more significant benchmark against which VLA will be measured in coming years.

⁶ Each Pulse surveys attracted response rates above 70%; the GD&I survey was 58% and the PMS 23%.

Gender Diversity & Inclusion staff survey results data (April 2021) *58% of staff responded to this survey



3% of our staff identified as First Nations (1.7% in April 2018)



17% identified as LGBTIQ+ (10% in April 2018)



0.8% identified as transgender and gender diverse (0.3% per cent in April 2018)

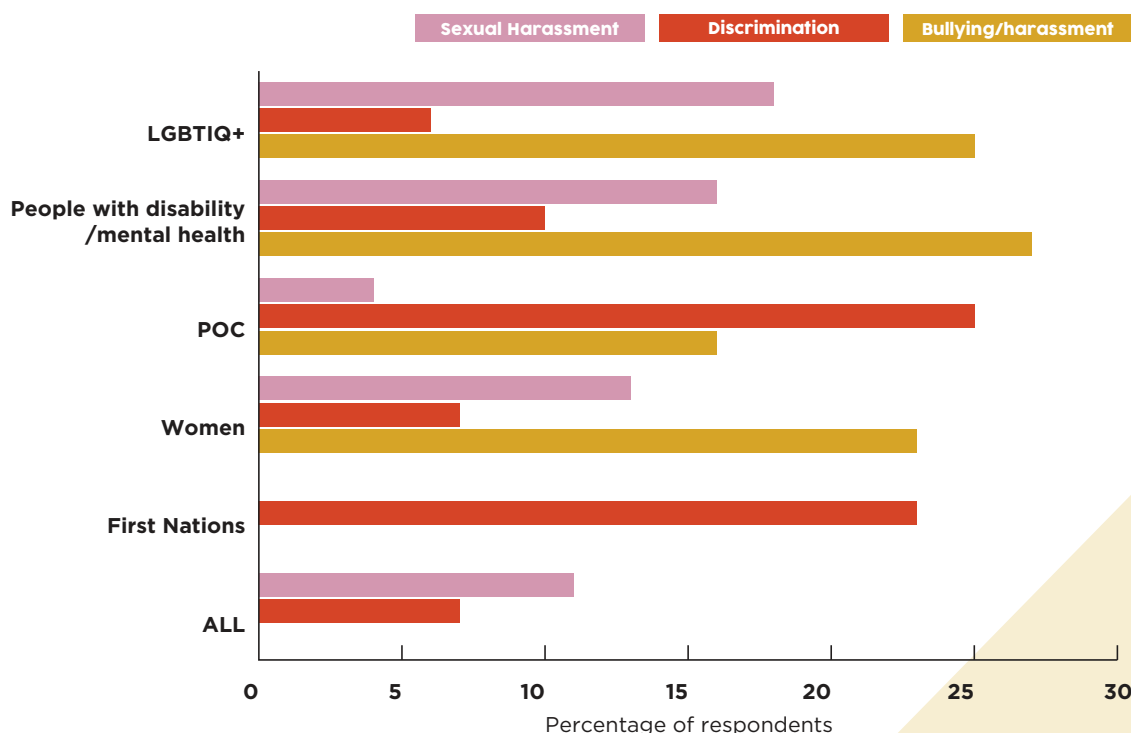


27% identified as having disability or mental health issue (12% in April 2018)



38% identified as being from culturally diverse backgrounds (42% in April 2018) of which 19% identified as being people of colour. (This information was not collected in April 2018)

Staff experience at external locations



Our consultation and engagement

Who we consulted

Consultations on our WGA findings and proposed actions to be included in this GEAP were carried out with almost 100 people including:

- our Board
- people for whom gender equality may be compounded by disadvantage or discrimination, including VLA's staff diversity networks. Consultation occurred with members of the First Nations Staff Network, with the Cultural Diversity Consultative Committee, the Pride Network, and the Disability Employee Network
- staff employed at various levels of the organisation, and employment types (part time, casual, flexible, permanent, contract etc.) including union delegates and staff Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs), and staff who have experienced our recruitment processes
- the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU).

Key themes from our consultations included:

1. **Building trust and confidence with staff:** Staff told us that it is important we have processes and systems that are clear and transparent, and well communicated to all staff. Staff reported that there is a sense of stigma and fear of discrimination which prevents reporting sexual harassment or self-identifying about your disability or your gender (in the payroll system or to managers).
2. **Bullying, harassment, and discrimination:** Reducing harassment, especially sexual harassment, should be a priority for the GEAP and as a social justice organisation, staff felt strongly that VLA should take proactive action in this space. This is particularly relevant to behaviours experienced by staff in external work locations. Staff did express concern about a lack of understanding of the reporting process and a lack of a victim-centric approach.
3. **Gender pay gap:** Staff were concerned about the gender pay gap, particularly at the senior levels and commonly reported a need for VLA to take action to review and address issues of equal pay for equal work across the organisation.
4. **Workforce composition:** Staff felt the organisation needed to better reflect the overall gender proportions at all levels of the organisation and were concerned about the gender composition of leadership and executive roles. Members of our Pride Network said that the descriptors for gender in our payroll system are barriers to trans and gender diverse staff being formally recognised in our gender composition reporting. Further feedback suggested we conduct a survey of trans and gender diverse staff to seek staff consent for their experience to be reported within the GEAP, which we have undertaken to action to assist future reporting on workplace composition. The Pride Network is aware that a number of trans and gender diverse staff are employed at VLA. Being unable to reflect their identity and experience was viewed as a significant gap in our data.
5. **Flexible work arrangements:** Overall, staff were positive about their experiences of flexibility and support and noted this was evident in the data presented. Staff would like to see more creative options for women who are balancing caring responsibilities with paid work (e.g., compressed working week rather than part time work). Staff were also pleased to see positive actions proposed to encourage and support male staff to take up carers responsibilities as well as an acknowledgement of "stage of life" changes and the potential impact on work.
6. **Data and reporting systems:** Staff acknowledged the barriers and challenges relating to data collection and the importance of improving systems and data sets however there was concern that there was too much focus on actions relating to data improvement and that this did not specifically address issues of gender inequality.

Annexure 1 includes details of *how* we consulted to develop the GEAP.

Our strategies and measures

The *Gender Equality Act 2020* and regulations require that our GEAP must include:

- strategies and measures for promoting gender equality in the workplace, based on our gender audit results;
- how the gender pay equity principles have been considered in the development of the action plan;
- a discussion of gaps in audit data and the need to collect more holistic data; and
- an articulation of how VLA has considered intersectional gender inequality.

Our other diversity and inclusion plans and strategies reflect VLA's strong commitment to building greater awareness of gender equality, with an intersectional lens, to ensure this awareness impacts our whole-of-organisation decision making and activities. We aim to be a leading advocate for gender equality in the legal assistance sector, and in the justice sector more broadly, promoting the benefits of an inclusive culture in all aspects of our work and in our organisation.

The VLA Board, Executive Management Group and Senior Leadership Team will champion inclusion and gender equality. This GEAP helps us achieve this by articulating a strong and consistent message and rationale for gender diversity. It requires accountability and a greater focus on gender equality as a strategic priority. It aligns with VLA's broader and more ambitious vision for achieving gender equality.

Measures of success

We aim to achieve the following outcomes by 2025:

1. A reduction in the gender pay gap at all levels of VLA and an improvement in the average starting salary for women and trans and gender diverse staff at all levels (WGA **Indicator 3**)
2. Increased diversity of VLA executive and senior management teams, including via increased promotion of women, trans and gender diverse people, and women of diverse backgrounds from within VLA and improved gender balance of staff across VLA classification levels (WGA **Indicator 1**)
3. Leadership and accountability for gender equality (WGA **Indicator 2**)
4. Improved model for handling reports of sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination (WGA **Indicator 4**)
5. Increased applicants and recruitment of women, trans and gender diverse people, women of culturally diverse backgrounds and women with disability into senior roles (WGA **Indicator 5**)
6. Increased uptake of flexible working arrangements and inclusive leave entitlements by all staff, and part-time work, parental and carers leave by men (WGA **Indicator 6**)
7. Improved data on gender, trans and gender diversity and intersectional diversity in our workforce
8. Gender equality embedded in VLA programs and services.

Our commitments to gender equality are also supported by existing activities in our related strategies, including:

Our commitments to gender equality are also supported by existing activities in our related strategies, including:

VLA Strategy	Existing actions
Reconciliation Action Plan (2019–22)	
Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Action 4
Cultural Diversity and Anti-Racism Action Plan (2022–23)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide anti-racism education and training to equip staff with the knowledge, skills and tools required to be anti-racist. This includes topics such as historical contexts for racism, microaggressions, privilege and bystander intervention 	Action 5 Action 9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a deeper dive of our current workforce diversity data to understand any gaps in racial diversity. 	
Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2020–23)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review VLA’s recruitment protocols including key selection criteria and interview processes to embed cultural diversity and inclusion, and a plan to commence implementation has been developed 	Action 1.2 Action 1.3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure involvement of Cultural Diversity Consultative Committee (CDCC) members in the recruitment process for pathway programs. This may include reviewing and providing feedback for job advertisements, job referrals and shortlisting of candidates 	Action 1.5 Action 2.1 Action 2.3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target relevant culturally and linguistically diverse communities to promote pathways from education to employment, including promoting the career pathways at VLA such as the Australian African Legal Network 	Action 3.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a communications plan to raise awareness of the Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020–23 and other organisational initiatives that support and promote cultural diversity and inclusion 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and develop a three-tiered learning model for our staff to increase cultural competency progressively, ensuring it aligns with the Aboriginal Cultural Learning Strategy being developed as part of VLA’s RAP2 and the Client First Strategy 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue inclusion of events which promote cultural diversity in our internal calendar of events including Cultural Diversity Week and ensure these events are held in offices outside of Melbourne. 	
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy (2016–18)	
Improve pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander law students, graduates and lawyers.	Action 3.3
Disability Action Plan (2022–25)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve our understanding of our disability workforce through better data 	Objectives 7-11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a disability-positive, safe, and inclusive workplace culture 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide better support to staff members with disability and intersectional factors that impact on them and ensure our workplace is accessible 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure recruitment processes are accessible and equitable 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve career pathways and professional development opportunities for staff with disability. 	

How this plan is structured

We have aligned the structure of this GEAP so that the strategies and measures align with the Workplace Gender Audit Indicators 1 to 6. Gender indicator 7 on gendered segregation of the workforce - using ANZSCO codes - does not apply to VLA as we use a different job classification structure.

We have included a new focus area on data (7) and a focus area on embedding gender equality in VLA (8).

Timeframes are financial years specified below are as follows:

Year 1 (2021–22)

Year 2 (2022–23)

Year 3 (2023–24)

Year 4 (2024–25).



1. Gender pay equity⁷

Strategies

- 1.1** Implement revised remuneration policies and updated recruitment training that reinforce gender pay equity principles and ensure equitable pay outcomes
- 1.2** Undertake a targeted analysis of the gender pay gap at each classification level and identify actions to support pay equity
- 1.3** Review VLA's classification structure with a view to adopting a more contemporary model in consultation with CPSU

Measures

- There is no difference in the average annual salaries for all genders⁸ at each classification level
- There is no difference in the average commencement salaries for all genders at each classification level
- Report twice a year to the VLA Board on progress towards achieving a reduction in our gender pay gap
- Adoption of an agreed contemporary classification structure in the 2024-2028 VLA Enterprise Agreement that reflects work value, embeds gender equity principles, and complies with government wages policy

2. Gender composition of the workforce

Strategies

- 2.1** Provide career opportunities to support the appointment/promotion of women, trans and gender diverse women and women of diverse backgrounds to senior management and executive roles (also see 5.6)

Intersectional focus

- 2.2** Address the gender composition of our workforce through targeted recruitment approaches across all classification levels

Intersectional focus

- 2.3** Raise awareness of staff of our gender equality goals and related diversity, equity and inclusion objectives through regular communications, training programs, and the choice of speakers at events and forums.

Intersectional focus

- 2.4** We will promote the affirmation and gender transition leave now available in our Enterprise Agreement 2020-24 (EBA) to better support the LGBTIQ+ staff and community

Intersectional focus

Measures

- Number of women, trans and gender diverse staff and women of diverse backgrounds appointed/ promoted to senior management and executive roles (also see 5.6)
- Improved gender balance across VLA classification levels where there are the biggest discrepancies shown in annual gender composition reporting
- Number of communications, events, and speakers
- Total number of staff who complete updated Diversity and Inclusion, Unconscious bias training continues to be around 75-85%
- Increased awareness of this leave type, measured through survey responses
- Number of staff who access this leave type

⁷ In line with Pay Equity Principles outlined in the Overview of this plan.
⁸ All genders includes women, men, transgender and gender diverse staff

Timeline for completion	Work already committed to or underway	Responsible
Year 4	New	People and Culture

Year 4	New but committed to by EMG	People and Culture
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Timeline for completion	Work already committed to or underway	Responsible
Year 4	Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020–23 Key Priority 1.5	People and Culture, EMG

Year 4	Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020–23 Key Priority 1.2	People and Culture
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Year 4	New Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020–23 Key Priority 3.4	People and Culture
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Year 4	In progress as part of EBA implementation	People and Culture
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3. Leadership and accountability

Strategies

3.1 Strengthen the skills of the Board, Executive and Senior management to actively support gender equality in the workplace

3.2 Embed Board and Executive accountability for workforce gender equality

3.3 Promote gender equality in the legal assistance sector by sharing our lessons from undertaking this work with our partners

Measures

Participation of the Board, Executive and Senior management teams in gender equality development and promotion programs and training

Inclusion of a standing item on gender equality and diversity workforce issues in Board and Executive papers

Establish a Gender Equality Committee, chaired by the Director, People and Culture, with representatives from all directorates of VLA and the chairs of all staff diversity networks including a trans or gender diverse staff member, to oversee GEAP implementation

Actively participate in external events promoting gender equality e.g. around our Equitable Briefing Strategy

Promote the importance of gender equality across the legal assistance sector by sharing our GEAP and related guidance material, and inviting participation in community of practice discussions on gender equality



Timeline for completion	Work already committed to or underway	Responsible
Year 2	New	People and Culture
Year 1	New	People and Culture
Year 3	New	All Directorates VLA Chambers Regions and Service Delivery

4. Workplace sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination

Strategies	Measures
<p>4.1 Implementation of the recommendations from the 2021 Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) review of our sexual harassment policy and processes</p>	<p>Establishment of a standalone Sexual Harassment policy</p> <p>90% of staff attend face-to-face Respectful Workplace behaviours training</p>
<p>4.2 Implement a new model of reporting sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination (including anonymous reporting options, and questions in the staff GD&I survey), supported by updating our Respectful Workplace Behaviours training</p>	<p>People and Culture staff face to face training on managing reports of sexual harassment with a victim-centric lens</p> <p>Health and Safety representatives complete WorkSafe refresher training on gendered violence and sexual harassment</p> <p>Procurement and introduction of a new reporting model which considers third party and by-stander reporting</p> <p>Feedback from staff that their reports have been handled safely and effectively</p> <p>Staff survey data and HR data indicate increased confidence in the reporting process</p> <p>All staff complete e-learning modules on Respectful Workplace Behaviours, and Diversity and Inclusion Training</p>

Timeline for completion	Work already committed to or underway	Responsible
Year 2	<p>Work already underway as part of the VEOHRC review response</p> <p>Cultural Diversity and Anti-Racism Action Plan 1.2, 1.3</p> <p>Disability Action Plan Objective 8</p>	People and Culture



5. Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace

Strategies	Measures
<p>5.1 Review of recruitment and promotion practices in line with the Pay Equity Principles⁹</p> <p>5.2 Strengthen attraction and branding strategies to increase applicants who are women and women from diverse backgrounds</p> <p>Intersectional focus</p>	<p>Development of recruitment guidance material for salary negotiations</p> <p>Establishment of a VLA pay policy, available for all staff to access on the intranet</p> <p>Collect and report on data of the proportion of applicants in recruitment processes who are women, trans and gender diverse and women of diverse backgrounds</p>
<p>5.3 Understanding and addressing barriers to employment of women, trans and gender diverse staff and women of diverse backgrounds</p> <p>Intersectional focus</p>	<p>Promotion of VLA as safe and inclusive workplace for women and trans and gender diverse, and women from diverse backgrounds through targeted recruitment campaigns</p> <p>Develop a program that actively promotes employment opportunities for women, trans and gender diverse staff and women of diverse backgrounds</p>
<p>5.4 Improve diversity on recruitment panels</p> <p>Intersectional focus</p>	<p>Number of staff on recruitment panels who identify as being from a diverse background</p>
<p>5.5 Update advice on gender equality and diversity in recruitment training and guidance material</p> <p>Intersectional focus</p>	<p>Number of staff on panels who complete updated recruitment and selection training</p>
<p>5.6 Provide increased opportunities for leadership training and development to support career pathways and promotion of women, trans and gender diverse staff and women of diverse backgrounds</p> <p>Intersectional focus</p>	<p>Development of a leadership program for all women, trans and gender diverse people and women of diverse backgrounds</p> <p>Number of women, trans and gender diverse staff and women of diverse backgrounds that occupy senior roles year on year</p> <p>Number of women, trans and gender diverse staff, First Nations staff, and women of diverse backgrounds completing leadership training</p>

⁹ Gender Equality Act 2020 section 10 and see above in Overview section of this plan.

Timeline for completion	Work already committed to or underway	Responsible
Year 3	<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy 2020-25</p> <p>Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020-23 Key Priority 1.2</p> <p>Disability Action Plan 2022-25 Objective 10</p>	People and Culture
Year 3	New	People and Culture
Year 2	<p>Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020-23 Key Priority 1.2</p> <p>Disability Action Plan 2022-25 Objective 10</p>	People and Culture
Year 2	<p>Work underway by Strategic Resourcing Team</p> <p>Cultural Diversity and Anti-Racism Action Plan 2.3</p>	People and Culture
Year 2	<p>Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020-23 Key Priority 1.5</p> <p>Disability Action Plan 2022-25 Objective 10</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy 2020-25</p>	People and Culture

6. Leave and flexible work, flexible working arrangements, and family and caring responsibilities

Strategies

6.1 Promote workplace flexibility options and leave entitlements including the hybrid work model for all staff, with targeted promotion to increase men accessing primary carers' leave

Measures

Increased number of alternative flexible work arrangements recorded in the payroll system

Increased number of men working flexibly, including part time and accessing primary carer's leave

Increase in alternative flexible work arrangements (such as compressed hours) for women

Increased number of men accessing the new additional paid parental leave entitlements, for secondary caregivers assuming responsibility as primary caregiver

Identify opportunities for role-modelling by senior male staff of the use of flexible work and additional paid leave entitlements

6.2 Implement a streamlined policy and procedure to support staff to have their identity recognised, following a change of name due to e.g., gender transition or affirmation, marital status

Positive feedback and inclusive experience provided for staff and private practitioners who experience the new change of name procedure and policy

Intersectional focus

6.3 Better support staff experiencing stage of life concerns such as menopause, elder care, disability care responsibilities, and retirement planning

Staff experience data through survey indicates acceptable (higher than 50%) satisfaction scores across all age groups relating to work life balance, carer responsibility and workload

Training for managers and People & Culture about reasonable adjustments, and the positive duty under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*

Exploring support in relation to leave and better accommodation for staff experiencing menopausal, menstruation and endometriosis symptoms

6.4 Audit worksites to ensure they are safe, accessible, and inclusive for women, trans and gender diverse staff and women of diverse backgrounds

The audit has been completed and a plan of any required works has been prepared and budget planning commenced

Timeline for completion	Work already committed to or underway	Responsible
Year 1	Work underway in HSW and promotion in 2019-20 through internal communications about men in VLA working flexibly and taking parental leave.	People and Culture
Year 2	Work underway in Grants and Quality Assurance	People and Culture, Grants and Quality Assurance, Legal Practice
Year 4	New Disability Action Plan 2022-25 Objective 9	People and Culture
Year 4	New Disability Action Plan 2022-25	Facilities, Corporate Affairs

7. Improving data on gender and intersectionality in our workforce

Strategies	Measures
<p>7.1 Explore ways to improve data collection on gender diversity composition in the payroll system</p> <p>7.2 Encourage staff to update personal information in the VLA payroll system</p> <p>Intersectional focus</p>	<p>Increased percentage of staff who report diversity data in the payroll system, ESS, (as at 8 February 2022, 15% of staff provided personal information)</p> <p>Consider ways to capture data about the number of trans and gender diverse staff in VLA, in conjunction with trans and gender diverse staff</p>
<p>7.3 Increase staff response rate in the People Matter Survey (PMS) to ensure data on flexibility and other key indicators is statistically significant</p>	<p>Increased participation of VLA staff in the PMS, target 30% participation for year 1, and at least 35% for year 2 and subsequent years</p>
<p>7.4 Collect data on diversity and key indicators (safety, career progression, complaints) in Exit Surveys and Stay Interviews (in first two years of employment)</p> <p>Intersectional focus</p>	<p>Improved diversity data on performance of key indicators for staff who are trans and gender diverse and from diverse backgrounds (safety, career progression, complaints/reporting) across multiple survey platforms</p>
<p>7.5 Improve Springboard recruitment platform demographic data on applicants in recruitment processes</p>	<p>Adapt the functionality of Springboard (recruitment platform) and Aurion (staff payroll and ESS) to improve data collection from those seeking and securing employment with VLA</p>
<p>7.6 Improve gender diversity and other diversity data on VLA Board via a survey</p>	<p>VLA Board diversity data is accurate and reported annually</p>
<p>7.7 Update reporting templates for sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination to include date and demographic data</p>	<p>Improved capability to monitor and report on sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination and continue to meet privacy and confidentiality provisions</p>
<p>7.8 Resourcing and reporting on progress against our plan to the Executive Management Group (EMG and the VLA Board)</p> <p>Intersectional focus</p>	<p>Delivery of annual, clear, and insightful reports on the diversity of the VLA workforce (broken down by division, gender, and job groups) to show workforce trends, including employee turnover and recommendations for improvements to EMG and the VLA Board</p>

Timeline for completion	Work already committed to or underway	Responsible
Years 1-4	Work underway by People and Culture and Strategic Communications Cultural Diversity and Anti-Racism Action Plan 2.2 Disability Action Plan 2022–25 Objective 7	People and Culture and Strategic Communications
Years 1-4	Work planned to increase our communication and promotion to staff of benefits of completing the PMS	People and Culture
Year 2	Work underway on Exit Surveys by Learning and Organisational Development	People and Culture
Year 1	Work underway in People and Culture to update Springboard Disability Action Plan 2022–25 Objective 7	People and Culture
Year 2	New	People and Culture
Year 2	New Cultural Diversity and Anti-Racism Action Plan 1.2 Disability Action Plan 2022–25 Objective 7	People and Culture
Year 2	New	People and Culture Data and Digital Information Services

8. Embedding gender equality in VLA programs and services

Strategies

8.1 Embed gender equality in organisational strategy, planning, programs, and services

8.2 Strengthen the gender-responsiveness of VLA programs and services across service design, implementation, and evaluation, through the integration of Gender Impact Assessment

8.3 Build competence, capability and commitment around gender, gender diversity and intersectionality at VLA through training to increase awareness of gender inclusion and diversity

Intersectional focus

Measures

Strategy 26, annual corporate plans, directorate and regional plans, strategic advocacy priorities, and program plans include consideration of how our work will contribute to gender equality for clients and the Victorian community

Improved practices around the use of inclusive language

Project Management Office guidance for program managers integrates Gender Impact Assessment in service design, implementation, and evaluation

Gender Impact Assessments Working Group meets and oversees, monitors, and promotes Gender Impact Assessments

Introduce a new eLearning module for staff on gender diversity and analysis including undertaking Gender Impact Assessments



Timeline for completion	Work already committed to or underway	Responsible
Year 1- 4	Strategic Planning and Investment and Research, Evaluation and Library have included the gender equality work in draft VLA's Strategy 26 and VLA Corporate Plan 2021-22	Strategic Planning and Investment, Research, Evaluation and Library, Sector Engagement and Service Design, Program Directorates
Year 2	Two Gender Impact Assessments have been conducted on policies and recommendations made Gender will be included in policy development guidance and strategic advocacy templates New	Strategic Planning and Investment (Project Management Office), Research, Evaluation and Library, Sector Engagement and Service Design, Program Directorates
Year 2	New	People and Culture

Measuring progress

Implementation Plan

The four-year GEAP is supported by VLA's leadership and requires them, and each and every staff member, to take action to achieve its vision. We have developed an Implementation Plan including measures, timelines and accountabilities which will enable VLA to track and report on our progress against the workplace gender equality indicators.

Reporting and communication

The Chairperson and CEO have agreed that management will provide an update in the CEO Report three times a year (February, June, October) in relation to progress and implementation of the Disability Action Plan 2022-25, the Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-25, sexual harassment and anti-racism measures.

A report on progress against our GEAP measures specifically will be provided to the Executive Management Group, the VLA Board and to staff through the Gender Equality (GE) Committee, to be chaired by the Director, People & Culture in the Senior Leadership Team. A full progress report will be provided to the CGEPS in October 2023 as required by the legislation. Further reporting obligations are listed below.

- December 2022 – progress report to GE Committee, EMG and VLA Board
- June 2023 – progress report to GE Committee, EMG and VLA Board and staff and also to be provided to the CGEPS by October 2023
- June 2024 – progress report to GE Committee, EMG and VLA Board
- December 2024 – progress report to GE Committee, EMG and VLA Board
- June 2025 – final progress report to GE Committee, EMG and VLA Board and staff and also to be provided to the CGEPS by October 2025)
- Development of a new four-year GEAP – January to June 2025.

Appendix 1 - How we consulted

Our consultation included the following approaches:

- A framing consultation session held with the Gender Equality Working Group (made up of 17 members of staff from a broad cross section of backgrounds and parts of the organisation)
- A variety of options were provided to staff to participate in consultations, including three initial “open sessions” (presenting VLA's WGA Data and one follow up open session presenting the proposed GEAP actions). Participation in these sessions was well publicised internally
- Providing confidential feedback on the WGA data and GEAP actions by email or in person, as well as the option to use an anonymous feedback form
- Staff diversity networks were invited to a forum with the project team to provide input into the safest and most engaging options for consultation with network members.

In all our consultations we ensured that support mechanisms through our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) were in place for staff that may have found the content upsetting.

Take-up of the various options for consultation was as follows:

Consultation options	Attendance
Gender Equality Working Group x 2 meetings	17
CPSU	4 (2 VLA delegates and 1 CPSU Industrial Organiser)
Health and Safety staff representatives	3 via the Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee and follow up email
WGA Open Staff Session #1	10
WGA Open Staff Session #2	9
WGA Open Staff Session #3	13
Disability Employee Network	4
Executive Management Group	5
VLA Board	7
First Nations Staff Network	Members chose to attend open staff sessions
Cultural Diversity Consultative Committee	7
Pride Network x 4	11
Open Staff 'Proposed Actions' Consultation	5
Anonymous Feedback Forms	2
Written feedback from staff via email	2
One-on-one discussions with the Project Manager	3

All staff were provided with information ahead of consultation sessions, in the form of a presentation pack on the WGA data and a document outlining proposed actions for the GEAP.

The draft GEAP was then taken to the Executive Management team, and then we commenced our second-round consultation with our staff Gender Equality Working Group. It became clear that we had not sufficiently represented the feedback from trans and gender diverse staff which highlights a broader organisational learning and area of focus for VLA beyond the GEAP. Members of the Pride Network expressed frustration with the draft and the lack of visibility of trans and gender diverse staff in the plan, so a series of further consultations were held with the Pride Network and the CPSU before it was sent to our Board for endorsement.

