



# **Workplace Gender Equality Action Plan**

## ***2021-2025***



Mildura Rural City Council

## Document Control Page

### Document Information

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### Document Approvals

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## Acknowledgement of Country

Mildura Rural City Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land, which now comprises the Mildura Rural City municipality. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and celebrate and respect their continuing cultures and acknowledge the memories of their ancestors.

## Our Vision

Making this the most liveable, people-friendly community in Australia.

## Our Values

Employees of Mildura Rural City Council were involved in the development of a core set of five values to support the Principles of Business Excellence - Respect, Honesty, Integrity Transparency, and, Accountability.

### **RESPECT**

We will be respectful towards others and value differences.

### **HONESTY**

We will be ethical and open.

### **INTEGRITY**

We will be reliable and trustworthy in all that we do.

### **TRANSPARENCY**

We will be objective and fair in our communications and decisions.

### **ACCOUNTABILITY**

We will be consistent and responsible for our actions.

## Principles of Business Excellence

### **PRINCIPLE 1: LEADERSHIP**

By providing clear direction through strategies and plans Council will achieve agreed outcomes for our community

### **PRINCIPLE 2: CUSTOMERS**

Council is here to provide services to the whole municipality and therefore our community should have a say in what we do and how we do it

### **PRINCIPLE 3: SYSTEMS THINKING**

Council recognises that achieving excellent outcomes for our community is done through all parts of the organisation working together effectively and with other levels of government and the wider community

### **PRINCIPLE 4: PEOPLE**

By involving and developing people Council enhances commitment, performance and working relationships to improve organisational outcomes

### **PRINCIPLE 5: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

To remain relevant and capable of producing excellent results our organisation needs to continually learn and adapt

### **PRINCIPLE 6: INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE**

Council will make the best quality decisions when effort is spent to collect and present all objective relevant data and information

**PRINCIPLE 7: VARIATION**

By addressing the underlying factors that cause our processes to deliver inconsistent or unpredictable outcomes (variation) Council's customers will receive the highest standard of service

**PRINCIPLE 8: CORPORATE AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Council will manage its operations to comply with law and ethical standards and to produce an overall positive impact on our community

**PRINCIPLE 9: SUSTAINABLE RESULTS**

To deliver sustainable results Council must have a culture that promotes accountability through all levels of the organisation

## Introduction

Mildura Rural City Council is committed to promoting gender equality and the prevention of violence against women in the workplace and in the community. Council has 9 elected members and employs over 600 staff and provides public spaces and services to its 59,000 residents.

As an employer of over 600 individual staff, Council has a responsibility to ensure all employees, their families and potential future employees are treated with dignity, respect and are given equitable opportunities to grow their careers and develop both professionally and personally. By ensuring these opportunities, we hope to spread the benefits of Gender Equality throughout the wider community.

The *Gender Equality Act 2020* requires the public sector, Councils and universities to take positive action towards achieving workplace gender equality within their organisations. This Gender Equality Action Plan identifies actions to increase gender equality within Mildura Rural City Council for staff and Councillors.

Our Gender Equality Action Plan is an internally focused document that will support our staff to share their knowledge throughout their communities.

### What is gender equality?

Gender equality is the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for people of all genders. Equality does not mean that everyone is the same but that everyone's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of all genders are taken into consideration, recognising the diversity of different groups of people and also the diversity of individuals within those groups.

### Why is gender equality important?

Gender equality affects everyone and we all experience it in different ways – from gender stereotypes to wage differences to how people are treated based on their ethnicity – gender equality (and inequality) can be seen across the community.

Studies show that communities who have greater levels of gender equality are healthier, safer and more economically stable. In the preparation of the Gender Equality Act 2020, the Victorian Government<sup>1</sup> has highlighted some of the benefits gender equality brings including:

- *Gender equality prevents violence against women and girls* – gender inequality is key driver when it comes to violence against women. But when gender roles are challenged, women are shown respect and violence against women is not condoned, gender equality is strengthened and levels of family violence and violence against women decrease.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.vic.gov.au/benefits-gender-equality](http://www.vic.gov.au/benefits-gender-equality)

- *Gender equality is good for the economy* – in this case the numbers tell the story:

Australia's GDP would increase by 11% if the gender employment gap was closed.

The Australian economy would gain \$8 billion if women transitioned from tertiary education into the workforce at the same rate as men.

Businesses with at least 30% women in leadership positions are 15% more profitable.

Family violence costs the Victorian economy more than \$3.4 billion a year and takes up 40% of police work.

Women do most unpaid care work. This has major costs - the unpaid care economy in Australia is nearly six times larger than the paid economy.

- *Gender equality is a human right*
- *Gender equality makes our communities safer and healthier* – Communities with the highest rates of overall health and wellbeing are those with greater levels of gender equality. Communities with unequal rights, responsibilities and opportunities see higher rates of violence, are less safe and have lower levels of overall wellbeing.

These are the basis for why gender equality is important to Mildura Rural City Council and are the reason why we want to see true change.

## How is Council working to support gender equality?

Council has long been an advocate for gender equality and it is evident the systems, processes, policies and programs we have in place.

Council is a proud White Ribbon Accredited organisation and has been working in this space since 2015. The White Ribbon Workplace Accreditation Program has allowed us to investigate and understand the underlying attitudes, stereotypes and gender norms that existed in our organisation. Over the last 7 years, we have worked hard to raise the level of understanding about gender equality, gender equity and gender based violence across the organisation.

Our Council has also shown a great commitment to understanding the role gender plays in our community.

### **Cr Helen Healy –**

*Family violence is a significant issue in the Mildura Rural City Council community. It prevents those affected from fully participating in society and impacts individuals, families, workplaces, the community, and the economy.*

*We recognise that improving gender equality can help prevent violence and make our community safer, healthier, and more prosperous. We have zero tolerance for all forms of violence and believe raising awareness and supporting respectful relationships is crucial to bring attitudinal and behavioural change.*

*We are committed to all people enjoying the same opportunities, rights and obligations and will advocate for a whole of community Gender Equality and Primary Prevention of Family Violence Strategy.*

Our current Council Plan specifically targets gender equality and highlights our case for change, with the Gender Equality Action Plan noted as a key document and the following 4-year priorities highlighted:

- Work with our partners to prevent family violence
- Improve community health and wellbeing outcomes, reduce health inequalities and create healthy environments for all stages of life
- Shape a community in which children and families can reach their full potential
- Promote gender quality
- Foster a broader level of social inclusion and active participation in the community
- Reduce barriers and access for people with a disability to promote inclusion and participation
- Develop partnerships to support culturally diverse communities to transition, settle and actively participate in community life.
- Work with Aboriginal community members and organisations towards reconciliation, self-determination and closing the gap
- Ensure Council's workforce reflects the principles of diversity, inclusion and gender equality in our day-to-day leadership and workforce planning.
- Maintain a workplace culture where staff and Councillors are healthy and safe
- Work with our community to advocate for local needs and on key issues including prevention of family violence, gender equality, climate change, water security, health and wellbeing, equitable rating system

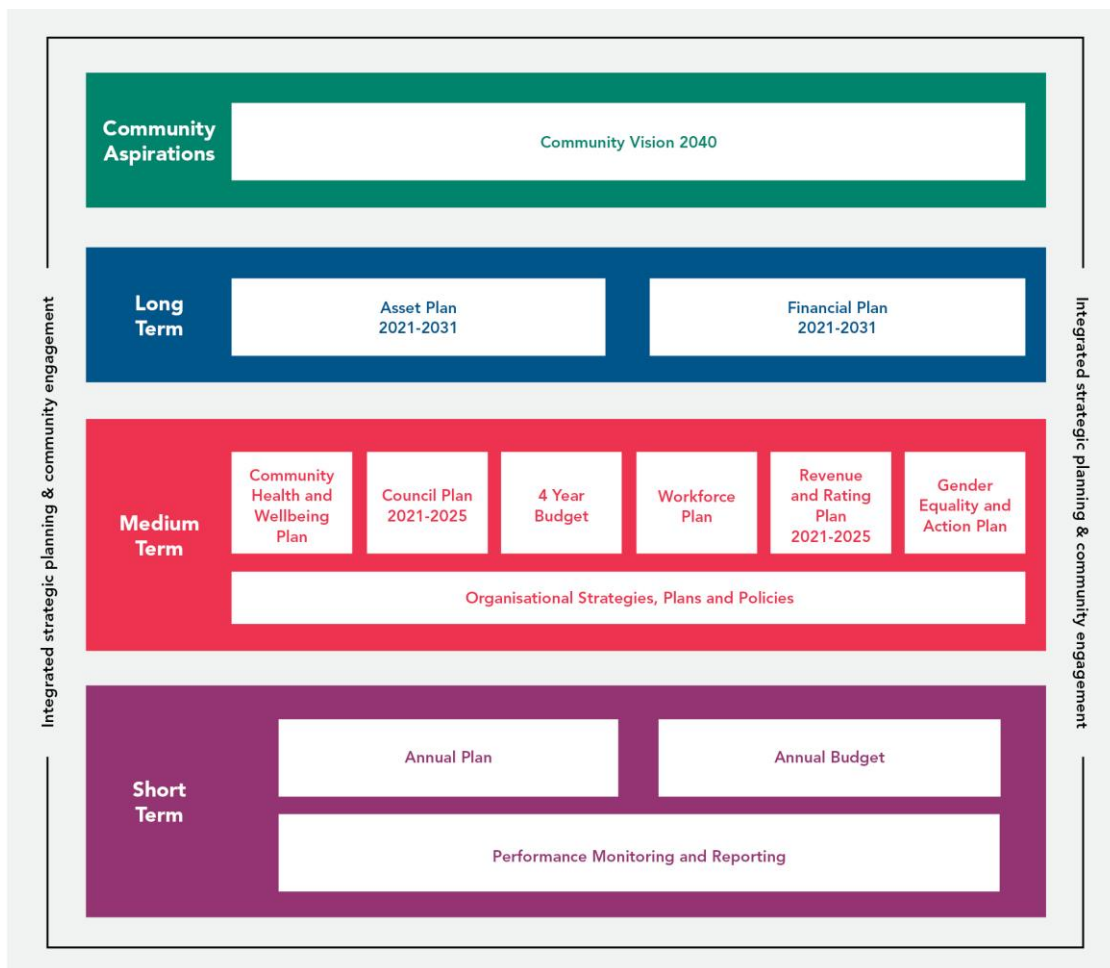
The Gender Equality Action Plan links in with the achievement of key Council plans, strategies and ultimately delivering the Community Vision 2040.

Council's Integrated Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework guides the Council in identifying community needs and aspirations over the long term (Community Vision), medium term (Council Plan) and short term (Annual Budget) and then holding itself accountable (Annual Report).

Elements within the Gender Equality Action plan are reflected from the Community Vision level right through to Council Action Plans and Budget.

Mildura Rural City Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework below outlines the relationship between these documents and highlights the importance of the Community Vision as the pinnacle of Council's Strategic Planning Framework as well as demonstrating how each element might inform or be informed by other parts of the Integrated Framework:





In accordance with this commitment, Council supports the passing of the *Gender Equality Act 2020* which requires the Victorian public sector including Councils to take positive action towards achieving workplace gender equality and promote gender equality in its policies, programs and services. The Act specifically requires defined entities to:

- promote, encourage and facilitate the achievement of gender equality and improvement in the status of women
- support the identification and elimination of systemic causes of gender inequality in policy, programs and delivery of services in workplaces and communities
- recognise that gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience on the basis of Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and other attributes
- redress disadvantage, address stigma, stereotyping, prejudice and violence, and accommodate persons of different genders by way of structural change
- enhance economic and social participation by persons of different genders
- further promote the right to equality set out in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

This work will address the principles of:

- All should live in a safe and equal society, have access to equal power, resources and opportunities and be treated with dignity, respect and fairness.
- Gender equality benefits all regardless of gender.
- Gender equality is a human right and precondition to social justice.
- Gender equality brings significant economic, social and health benefits.

- Gender equality is a precondition for the prevention of family violence and other forms of violence against women and girls.
- Advancing gender equality is a shared responsibility across the community.
- All human beings, regardless of gender, should be free to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives without being limited by gender stereotypes, gender roles or prejudices.
- Gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience on the basis of Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and other attributes.
- Women have historically experienced discrimination and disadvantage on the basis of sex and gender.
- Special measures may be necessary to achieve gender equality.

Council is proud of our past commitment to gender equality and we look forward to strengthening and developing our understanding and advocacy in this space into the future. With a workforce of over 600 individuals, we know that if our staff understand why gender equality is so important, then this knowledge will spread and grow throughout our community.

## What is Intersectionality?

The following information is from the Victorian State Government and is available online at <https://www.vic.gov.au/understanding-intersectionality>

**'Intersectionality'** refers to the ways in which different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation.

Aspects of a person's identity can include social characteristics such as:

- Aboriginality
- gender
- sex
- sexual orientation
- gender identity
- ethnicity
- colour
- nationality
- refugee or asylum seeker background
- migration or visa status
- language
- religion
- ability
- age
- mental health
- socioeconomic status
- housing status
- geographic location
- medical record
- criminal record

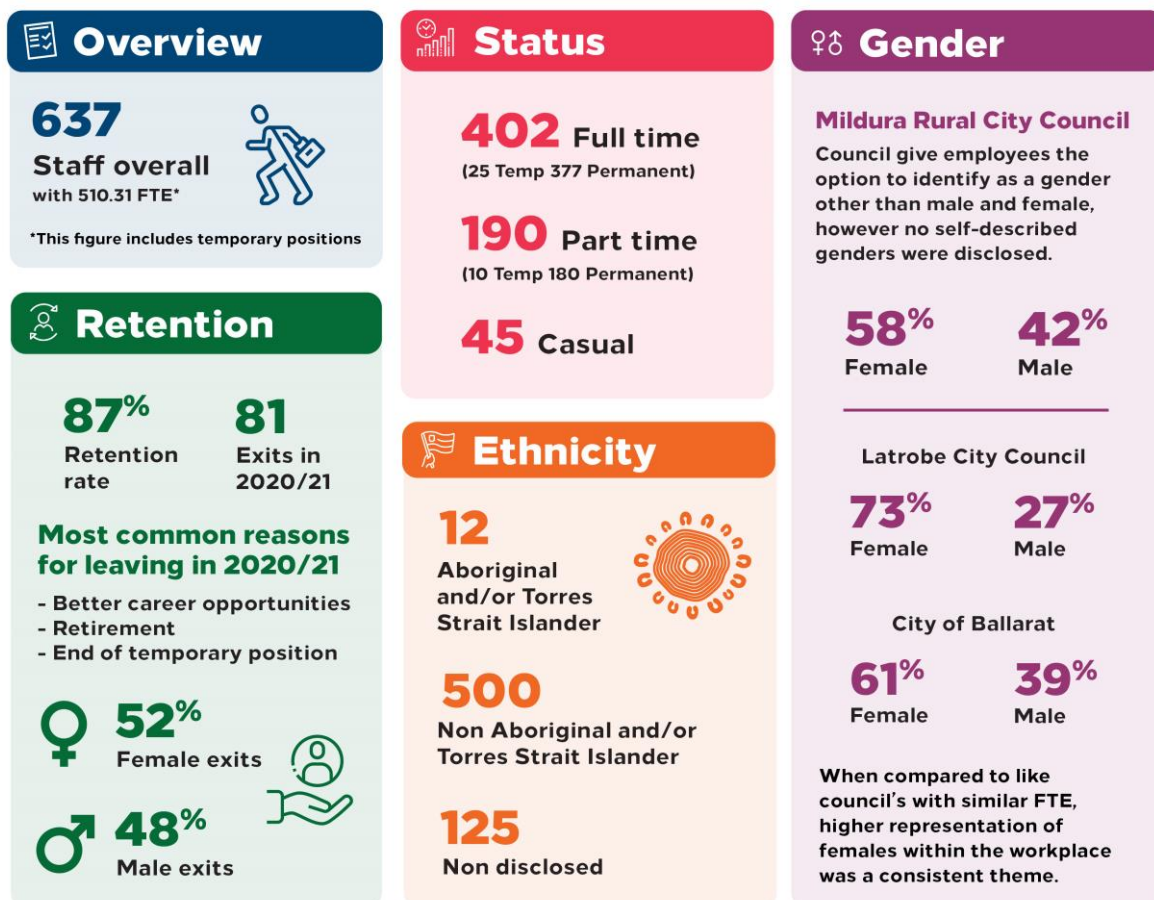
Attitudes, systems and structures in society and organisations can interact to create inequality and result in exclusion. These include:

- sexism
- racism
- homophobia
- biphobia
- transphobia
- intersex discrimination
- ableism
- ageism
- stigma

When these aspects or characteristics combine:

- there is a greater risk of people experiencing family violence
- people find it harder to get the help they need due to systemic barriers
- there is increased risk of social isolation

## Workforce Profile as at 30 June 2021



## Development of our Gender Equality Action Plan

Council engaged in a number of forums, workshops and training sessions hosted by the Gender Equality Commission in the lead up to the development of this action plan to ensure we were gathering the most relevant and accurate information and data from our systems.

Council staff then participated in the People Matters Survey conducted by the Victorian Public Service Authority (VPSA). 37% of staff took the opportunity to give feedback via this survey. While the participation rate was higher than the average for the Councils who participated, it was lower than we had hoped for compared to other staff surveys conducted. At the time the survey was open, Victoria went into a snap lockdown due to COVID-19. Anecdotally the feedback we received as to why certain cohorts did not participate included:

- COVID restrictions meant there was limited access to computers for outdoor staff
- COVID restrictions meant administrative staff who would normally support this process were working from home and not physically available to aid staff without computer access

A hardcopy / paper based survey was not an option provided by the VPSA which also prevented a particular cohort of staff from participating.

Data was also collected from our governing body being Councillors.

Data collection for the Workforce Audit was completed with much of the data required manual sourcing and formatting as it was not collected in a way that fed easily into the mandatory reporting template. Some of the required data was not previously collected by Council from staff as was not needed for other purposes and the Local Government sector specific software product used by Council does not have the fields to request / store the required information in a secure way.

The development of more streamlined and functional reporting systems will form part of our action plan, particularly in the early stages, however our current systems do not have the capacity to report data in the way that the Commission has requested and this will be an ongoing major issue in terms of reporting and the staff resources required to complete the work.

In addition to the data collected from the People Matters Survey and our own systems, we reviewed our current policies and processes to ensure alignment and required references to the *Gender Equality Act 2020*. We also undertook benchmarking with other Councils, researched current trends in relation to Local Government and other industry data in order to inform this action plan.

Our individual findings from the Victorian Auditors General's Officer (VAGO) Report into Sexual Harassment in Local Government tabled in December 2020 was included in the information for review. The report examined whether councils provide their staff and councillors with workplaces free from sexual harassment and the overall results are available at <https://www.audit.vic.gov.au/report/sexual-harassment-local-government> Mildura Rural City Council's specific report is not a public document due to the relatively low staff numbers at certain levels of the organisation which could make individual responses identifiable.

### Workshops and Consultation

Council engaged the Action for Gender Equality Partnership (AGEP) to complete independent consultations and evaluation.

Consultation sessions were held online via Teams which aimed to support strong engagement and also to adapt to COVID conditions with Mildura experiencing lockdown limitations during the *Gender Equality Act 2020* implementation process. This online mechanism also enabled the 'chat' function to be utilised so additional comments could be shared, particularly by participants who weren't confident to speak during the forums. Participants shared written contributions during these online consultations, including:

*"We need to change the stereotypes of certain roles to attract different people. Plus some of those in part time jobs would like full time work but it is not available". 11 Nov 21*

*"It is a consequence to of the nature of the areas in which we work". 15 Nov.21 (comment in relation to high levels of part-time work)*

Five consultation sessions were held for staff:

| Management Consultation                     |                             |   |
|---|-----------------------------|---|
| Session 1                                   | Thursday 21st October 2021  | Overview of the Gender Equality Act 2020 implementation   |
| Session 2                                   | Thursday 28th October 2021  | Overview of Data Analysis   |
| Session 3                                   | Friday 5th November 2021    | Next steps: Towards wider consultation and GE Action Plan   |
| Council Coordinators and Staff Consultation |                             |   |
| Session 4                                   | Thursday 11th November 2021 | Overview of the Gender Equality Act 2020 & Overview of the MRCC Baseline Data & detailed discussion of the recommendations for Action Planning. (90mins session)                        |
| Session 5                                   | Monday 15th November 2021   | Overview of the Gender Equality Act 2020 & Overview of the MRCC Baseline Data & detailed discussion of the recommendations for Action Planning. (90mins session) – Repeat of session 4. |

**Governing Body Consultation** – Council's governing body is our duly elected Councillors. While our Gender Equality Action Plan relates primarily to staff, we recognised Councillors need to understand the process and what we are trying to achieve. Councillors were given the opportunity to be involved in consultation via a survey and were given regular updates to through our portfolio reporting system. The draft Gender Equality Action Plan was forwarded to all Councillors for their information and feedback. Key feedback from the Councillors related to having a better understanding of the principles of Gender Equality and this resulted in Action 2.2 as outlined below.

At the same time as the GEAP was being developed, Council also undertook significant community consultation in relation to our newly developed Community Vision 2040. This resulted in specific and prominent Council and Councillor commitments to Equity, Access and Inclusion, as well as Gender Equality actions to support primary prevention agencies in their work to stop family violence in our municipality.

**Employee Representatives** – Council has in place a Joint Consultative Committee and an Employee Equal Opportunity Committee. Both committees include union representatives. Members of these committees were invited to attend the Staff Consultation sessions as outlined above.

In addition to this, we received written correspondence from the Australian Services Union in relation to their expectations and enacted their requests. In particular, we have made the Gender Equality Action Plan a standing item on the agenda for both the Joint Consultative Committee and Employee Equal Opportunity Committee meetings.

Council is currently negotiating a new Enterprise Agreement (due February 2023) and has ensured the Enterprise Agreement Committee includes staff who are part of the Gender Equity Act Implementation Working Group and have an intimate understanding of the Act and the GEAP.

### **Data and Information Analysis**

In order to ensure an independent expert review of our data and the information received from the Workshops, Action for Gender Equality Partnership (AGEP) were also engaged to complete the analysis of our baseline data and were supplied with:

1. Our People Matters survey results
2. VAGO Report into Sexual harassment in Local Government report including Mildura Rural City Council's specific results
3. Our de-identified data as required under the *Gender Equality Act 2020*
4. Any other relevant information as requested including current policies, processes and strategies.

AGEP completed the analysis and supplied Council with a detailed report for each indicator and recommendations for our consideration.

### **Key Insights from AGEP**

This report has formed the basis of the preparation of this action plan and a number of key insights were highlighted and are set out below:

#### **Indicator 1 – Gender composition at all levels of Mildura Rural City Council workforce**

- A significant gap was identified at level -4 of the organisation (see Appendix 1 for definition) with 63 men and 116 women in this grouping.
- A significant gap identified in relation to how Mildura Rural City Council currently collects intersectional data

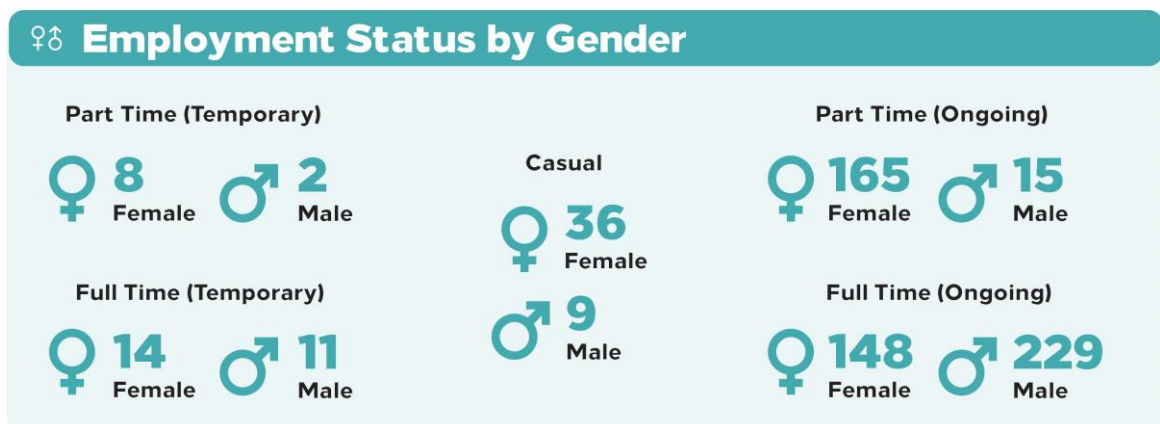
- Identified Mildura Rural City Council has a high proportion of people selecting “prefer not to say” in relation to intersectional data within the People Matters Survey.
- Issues in relation to Council structure and Australian Bureau of Statistics’ ANZSCO (Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations) coding was identified with further work to clarify roles/levels. Many of Council’s roles were difficult to align into ANZSCO categories and some of the decisions made on how to categorise roles were subjective.
- The reporting template required us to separate staff based on how many “levels” they were away from the CEO. In practice, this meant Level -1 staff included anyone who reports directly to the CEO, so General Managers and Executive Assistants were grouped together even though they have significantly different roles and conditions of employment. This has been identified by the Gender Equality Commission as an issue and Council will explore options to do this differently in the future.

### **Indicator 2 – Gender composition of governing bodies**

- The Governing Body is the Mildura Rural City Council (Councillors) and is a democratically publicly elected body. While Council has no direct capacity to shape the gendered composition of council, further work can be undertaken to publicly promote gender equality in local government and more diversity in those ‘running’ for Council.

### **Indicator 3 – Equal remuneration**

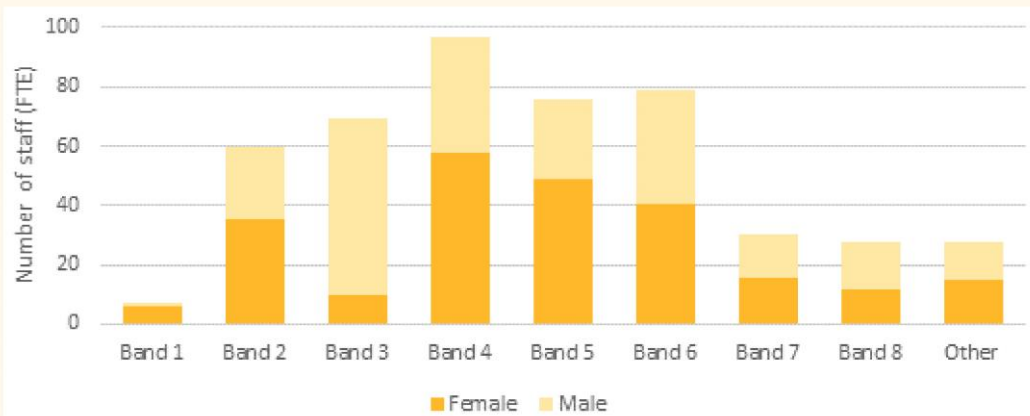
- Data illustrated women are over-represented in the salary range below \$65,000 and in the range over \$125,000
- Large numbers of women working part-time across the organisation. Part-time staff earn less, accumulate less leave entitlements and superannuation and can have less access to professional development and career advancement opportunities. Traditional gender stereotypes see women predominantly working less than full-time hours due to caring and family responsibilities and the roles which offer part-time work are again traditionally geared towards women.



- The current data and alignment to ANZSCO codes and Council’s occupation levels illustrates strong gender equity in remuneration across the organisation. Council operates under a structured banding process connected to occupations in local government which gives staff clarity when it comes to progression and equity. The banding process see the roles classified on the basis of the duties performed, not who is performing them.



## Staff classification levels



Positions are classified from Band 1 to 8 with a select number of roles falling outside this structure (e.g. Senior Officers and staff who operate under the Nurses (ANMF–Victorian Local Government) Award). With remuneration based on position, the opportunity for pay disparities between genders employed in the same position is removed. Noting Council has a higher female representation rate within the workplace, the bandings with slanted gender representation can predominantly be attributed to traditional gendered roles falling at that band.

### Indicator 4 – Sexual Harassment

- The VAGO report (December 2020) found 40 incidents at Mildura Rural City Council and 7% of people in the People Matter Survey shared experiences of sexual harassment. The gap between lack of reporting to the leadership and the experiences of sexual harassment requires a considered response.
- A theme emerged during the staff consultation in regards to the need for all team members to have a clear understanding what sexual harassment is and knowing the reporting mechanisms in place. Discussion focused on the emerging capacity for team members to directly intervene where misogyny and sexual harassment occurs within the workplace due to the high levels of training already undertaken.
- Additional comments surrounding the need for increased visible reminders (posters etc) and communication about how to report.

### Indicator 5 – Recruitment and promotion practices

- Consultation process focused on the total staff exiting the organisation and the process for reflection on why this was the case and the mechanism for sharing this reflective learning with management. The 81 exits from Council in 2020/2021 indicated the three top reasons people were leaving Council were due to the end of a contract, retirement and the end of a temporary positions and this number is historically consistent and not considered to be an area of concern.
- Professional and career development data illustrates very low take-up levels, although the consultation process outlined this is an indication of the way the data is recorded throughout the organisation, rather than actual opportunities for professional and career development.
- Recruitment was discussed at length and it was noted existing work was already occurring on ways to target positions toward gender-diverse and/or non-traditional genders and also target key cultural groups within the community, including First Nations communities. An item of feedback from the staff consultation was shared saying that 'being able to see yourself' is an important focus for Council ensuring that the demographics of the community is reflected in the makeup of the team.



- Strengthening of people's understanding of unconscious bias was considered as a priority.

***Indicator 6 – Utilisation of flexible work and other support practices***

- Eight percent of staff were on formal flexible work arrangements as at 30 June 2021. 50 women and 12 men were using formal flexible working arrangements at this point. This is expected to increase significantly as office based staff transition back to the office after working from home during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Council has established a flexible leave framework. Discussions indicated Council staff have a high level of understanding of the Family and Domestic Family Violence Leave policy.
- Not all flexible working arrangements are formally captured in current reporting systems and this data was not included in the figures (ie. 48/52 leave arrangements were not included)

***Indicator 7 – Gendered work segregation***

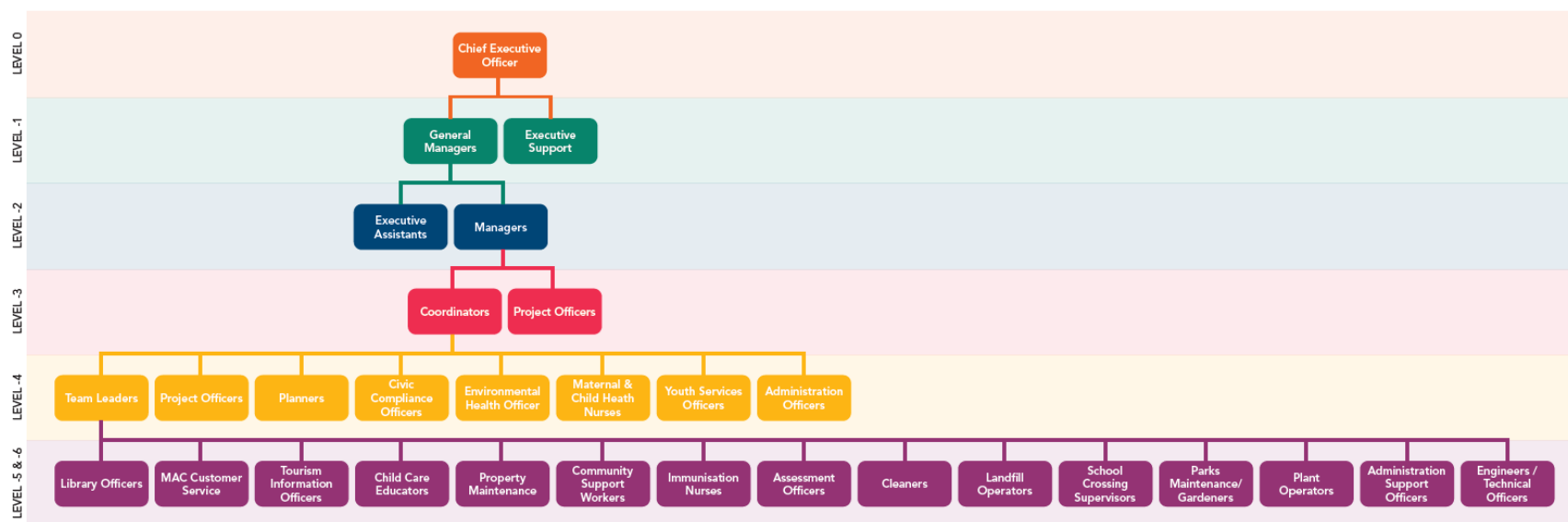
- Conventional gendered norms across occupations are evident within the workforce. The consultation sessions reflected on what impacts cultural and organisational change can achieve in addressing the social and structural gendered segregation.

***Other key points***

1. People Matter Survey responses – high level of “prefer not to say” responses in relation to personal information and there was concern about confidentiality and privacy in a regional, isolated community. Also, Council has a high percentage of staff with limited online accessibility (ie. some only have mobile phone access or no online access at all).
2. Resourcing and Workload for implementation of the *Gender Equality Act 2020* – Further work is required to determine how this will be resourced over the next four years and how key personnel with existing high workloads will be allocated to drive this process across the organisation. This is in addition to other legislated demands and community needs in a tight financial climate and with limited government grant funding options.

## Employee Classification Levels

Classification categories were determined by how many reporting levels an employee is from the CEO as per the organisational structure (as at 30 June 2021). This means someone who reports directly to the CEO is classified as level -1, someone who is two reporting levels from the CEO is level -2 and so on. The below image depicts some of the positions at each level. It is important to highlight that as team structures vary (e.g. some teams have team leaders and coordinators, and others just coordinators), this method of classification does not provide an accurate representation of level of seniority or responsibility.



## Actions and Deliverables

The following are our defined strategic actions, deliverables and measures of our Gender Equality Action Plan.

### Indicator 1: Gender composition at all levels of Council's workforce

| Action   | Deliverable  | Timeline  | Action Owner     |
|--|--|---|------------------|
| 1.1 Review level -4 gender representation with a view to understanding why there are substantially more women clustered in this level                    | <p>Benchmark against Councils in terms of Local Government norms at level -4 and review the roles at that level in comparison to their bandings.</p> <p>Survey staff at level -4 to determine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Barriers to gender equality</li> <li>Barriers to promotion</li> <li>Benefits to working at this level</li> <li>Level of job satisfaction</li> </ul> <p>Report findings to ELT.</p> | 2021/22   | MOD (HR)         |
| 1.2 Develop pathways for diverse team members and potential employees to move into non-traditional roles   | <p>Identify an appropriate team, complete a cultural review and develop a structured program to support diversity in non-traditional roles.</p> <p>Evaluate with intention to roll out to other teams.</p>   | <p>2022/23</p> <p>Evaluation in 2023/24</p>                 | MOD (HR)         |
| 1.3 Develop communication plan to profile diverse staff and staff working in non-traditional roles   | <p>Bi-annual feature in Council's internal Staff News profiling diverse staff and those working in non-traditional roles.</p> <p>Bi-annual profile in Council's external Community communications profiling diverse and non-traditional employment opportunities.</p>  | <p>2021/22</p> <p>2022/23</p> <p>2023/24</p> <p>2024/25</p> | MG&P (Mar/Comms) |
| 1.4 Review recruitment documentation to ensure language in position descriptions, advertising etc. is inclusive and promotes diversity, gender inclusive | Engage a Gender Equality expert to help review a sample of our recruitment and advertising documents and train relevant staff in the principles of inclusive language in recruitment.  | 2022/23   | MOD (HR)         |

|  |  |                     |                   |
|--|--|---------------------|-------------------|
| language and flexible work<br>(Also refer to 5.5)  |  |                     |                   |
| 1.5 Review how Council collects and records intersectional data.<br><br>Develop processes to collect and store data to encourage disclosure and protect privacy. | Current processes reviewed and updated with new process for collection and recording of intersectional data within current systems developed and communicated. | 2021/22 and 2022/23 | MOD (HR /Payroll) |
| 1.6 Engage with staff to measure the perceptions of inclusion and support within the organisation  | Measure the level of engagement within the organisation and availability of resources to ascertain areas for improvement.                                      | 2023/24             | MOD (HR)          |

#### Indicator 2: Gender composition of governing bodies

| Action   | Deliverable   | Timeline                                       | Action Owner |
|--|---|--|--------------|
| 2.1 Continue to engage with the Victorian Local Government Association (VLGA), Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and other opportunities to support and encourage more gender diversity. | Programs supported and promoted locally including the Local Women Leading Change project.                   | 2024/2025<br>(This is when elections fall due) | MG&P         |
| 2.2 Ensure Councillors have an understanding of Gender Equality principles.  | Gender Equality training is built into the Councillor Professional Development Program including induction. | 2024/2025                                      | MG&P         |

**Indicator 3: Equal remuneration**

| <b>Action</b>   | <b>Deliverable</b>  | <b>Timeline</b> | <b>Action Owner</b> |
|---|---|-----------------|---------------------|
| 3.1 Engage with staff currently working part-time to gauge their levels of satisfaction with their arrangement in terms of earning capacity and career progression. | Measure the level of satisfaction and prepare a report for ELT outlining data collected in relation to the perceived and actual benefits and barriers to part-time work.                                    | 2022/23         | MOD (HR)            |
| 3.2 Engage with people working full-time to identify barriers to flexible work arrangements   | Measure the level of satisfaction and prepare a report for ELT outlining data collected in relation to the perceived and actual benefits and barriers to flexible working arrangements for full-time staff. | 2022/23         | MOD (HR)            |

#### Indicator 4: Sexual Harassment

| Action  | Deliverable   | Timeline   | Action Owner                                      |
|---|---|--|---|
| 4.1 Ensure regular all-staff training about sexual harassment and Bystander Action training.  | <p>Training delivered on a bi-annual basis to all staff.</p> <p>Online sexual harassment awareness training module in relation developed as part of induction for new staff.</p>  | Ongoing  | MOD (HR)  |
| 4.2 Review and strengthen staff awareness of the reporting of sexual harassment mechanism with a particular focus on confidentiality. | <p>Engage with staff to understand the barriers to reporting.</p> <p>Reporting process reviewed, updated and clearly documented and accessible to all staff.</p> <p>Reporting process communicated as part of the HR Bulletin schedule on an annual basis, available on The Shed etc.</p> | <p>2021/22</p> <p>Ongoing in relation to communication</p> | MOD (HR)  |
| 4.3 Maintain White Ribbon Workplace Accreditation   | <p>White Ribbon Accreditation maintained.</p> <p>Investigate ways to formally engage with the Ochre Ribbon program to support Aboriginal staff.</p> <p>Provide culturally appropriate domestic violence information to the Shed.</p>  | <p>2021/22</p> <p>2022/23</p>                              | <p>MOD</p> <p>MCF in relation to Ochre Ribbon</p> |

### Indicator 5: Recruitment and promotion practices

| Action   | Deliverable   | Timeline                      | Action Owner |
|--|---|-------------------------------|--------------|
| <p>5.1 Exit interview data to include intersectional information</p> <p>Review exit interview questionnaire to include qualitative questions in relation to gender and inclusion experiences</p> | <p>Exit process updated to ensure any intersectional data available is included.</p> <p>Method for conducting exit interviews investigated.</p>   | 2021/22                       | MOD (HR)     |
| 5.2 Review the way professional and career development is captured in the organisation.  | Investigate capability of current systems to capture career development information and develop new process for this.   | 2022/23                       | MOD / MIS    |
| 5.3 Source and implement intersectionality specific training with a focus on workplace inclusion, gender equality and inclusive language   | <p>All supervisors of staff to have completed intersectionality training.</p> <p>All staff offered intersectionality training via online training module.</p>   | <p>2021/22</p> <p>2022/23</p> | MOD (HR)     |
| 5.4 Continue to offer Unconscious Bias training  | <p>Unconscious Bias incorporated into Recruitment &amp; Selection Training.</p> <p>Unconscious Bias training is offered at least once each year through the Corporate Training calendar to all staff.</p> | <p>2021/22</p> <p>Ongoing</p> | MOD (HR)     |
| 5.5 Provide relevant staff with updated training in relation to inclusive language and language that reaches people from a diverse back ground. (Also refer to 1.4)                              | Relevant staff have received training in relation to inclusive language   | 2021/22                       | MOD (HR)     |

#### Indicator 6: Utilisation of flexible work and other support practices

| Action  | Deliverable  | Timeline | Action Owner |
|---|--|----------|--------------|
| <p>6.1 Review the take-up of flexible working arrangements to increase the confidence for staff and management to encourage and/or support the take-up of these options.</p> <p>Strengthen the awareness of the provisions of Flexible Working Arrangement and Leave policies</p> | <p>Flexible Working Arrangements and Leave policies and processes reviewed, updated and clearly documented, communicated and accessible to all staff.</p> <p>Take up of FWA reported on annually as part of the HR Annual Report</p> <p>FWA and Leave options communicated as part of the HR Bulletin schedule and Policy of the Month on an annual basis.</p> | Ongoing  | MOD (HR)     |
| <p>6.2 Continue to build the awareness of Family Violence and particularly the primary prevention of family violence, including the availability and access of the MRCC policy on Family and Domestic Violence Leave.</p>   | <p>Family Violence Leave communicated as part of induction and regularly communicated via internal mechanisms.</p>   | Ongoing  | MOD (HR)     |

#### Indicator 7: Gendered work segregation

| Action   | Deliverable  | Timeline | Action Owner |
|--|--|----------|--------------|
| <p>7.1 Within one key organisational area of work or key occupation to increase engagement across all genders over the next four years</p> | <p>An increase in the gender composition of a selected area / job role by 2025</p> | 2024/25  | MOD (HR)     |



## Leadership and resourcing

Mildura Rural City Council has shown commitment to Gender Equality over many years and already has in place substantial resourcing in terms of staff commitment and budget for training, events, staff development and communication. This is evident through a number of current programs, processes and policies including examples such as:

- Council was the first Victorian Council to introduce a Councillor Portfolio dedicated to Gender Equality and to our knowledge, still one of the only Council's to have this in place
- Council is a White Ribbon accredited organisation since 2015 and is currently going through reaccreditation
- Gender Equality Policy
- Family & Domestic Violence Policy and generous related leave and support
- Flexible Working Arrangements Policy which specifically talks about gender equality, fairness and shared responsibilities
- Recruitment and Selection Policy, processes and training that has been in place for many years and that aims to remove bias and focus on the fundamental skills of the applicants
- An Enterprise Agreement that seeks to provide equality and fairness to all staff with generous allowances for parental leave, pre-natal leave, family and domestic leave etc.
- Significant budget allocation in terms of training and development in the areas of Family Violence Awareness, Unconscious Bias and By-Stander training over many years.

Engagement of AGEP to complete the consultation and analysis of data and feedback again shows Council's commitment to ensuring this GEAP is a robust and well considered plan.

### Gender Impact Assessments

Gender impact assessments (GIAs) are designed to help organisations like Council think critically about how policies, programs and services provided to the community will meet the different needs of women, men and gender diverse people.

The purpose of GIAs is to create better and fairer outcomes, and make sure all people have equal access to opportunities and resources.

While not specifically listed in the Actions and Deliverables list, GIA's are being undertaken by Council and training of staff is occurring in order to undertake GIA's and does form part of Councils ongoing approach.

### Ongoing resourcing plan

In 2021, Council set up the Gender Equality Project Control Group (GE PCG) whose role is to ensure we met the requirements of the Act. This group will continue as the team driving the implementation of the GEAP and overseeing other initiatives in relation to Gender Equality within our organisation. As mentioned above the GE PCG is made up of key Managers and General Managers in the organisation, ensuring ongoing high level buy-in and commitment.

In addition to a dedicated Gender Equality Project Control Group, Council have engaged a full time temporary Human Resources Project Officer. A percentage of this role has been allocated to supporting the implementation of the actions from the GEAP. This role is funded up to and including 15 September 2023. Staff resourcing requirements will be reviewed at this time.

Council recognises this work will require additional financial resourcing and as such, is proposing an additional annual budget allocation of \$15,000 to go towards supporting gender equality initiatives for staff. This will be subject to annual budget approval.

Other resourcing includes:

- Ongoing training commitment via the Corporate Training Budget
- Action Owners commitment to complete and report on the deliverable within their allocated time frame.

In addition to the proposed \$15,000 allocation above, it is estimated that the utilisation of existing Council resources and external funding focussed on Gender Equality initiatives, processes, support programs and human resources will equate to in excess of \$120,000 annually. Council will pursue any grant funding opportunities to bolster resourcing to assist with delivery of initiatives under this plan.

## Measuring progress and reporting

Council understands the importance of reporting and being able to see clear improvements and gaps. Our measurement, reporting and plan to ensure progress is outlined below:

| Reporting / Tracking Mechanism   | Timeline                   |
|--|----------------------------|
| Report every second year to the Commission   | First report due June 2023 |
| Annual Council Report – include reference to progress                                      | Annually                   |
| Participate in the People Matters survey   | Annually                   |
| Quarterly reports to Executive Leadership Team via the current strategic reporting process | Quarterly                  |
| Achievement register to monitor progress, ongoing consultation and communication           | Ongoing                    |

Significant work will be required in relation to our current systems and enabling more automated reporting systems.

A formal tracking and reporting document has also been developed to ensure the planned actions are delivered on time and have the desired outcomes.

## References, Legislation and Associated Documents

The Gender Equality Action Plan has been developed in conjunction / with reference to the following:

### References

Victorian Auditor-General's Office 2022, 'Sexual Harassment in Local Government'  
<https://www.audit.vic.gov.au/report/sexual-harassment-local-government>

Victorian Government 2021, 'Understanding Intersectionality' viewed 2 February 2022,  
<https://www.vic.gov.au/understanding-intersectionality>

Victorian Government 2021, 'The benefits of gender equality' viewed 26 February 2022  
[www.vic.gov.au/benefits-gender-equality](http://www.vic.gov.au/benefits-gender-equality)

### Legislation

*Gender Equality Act 2020*

### Associated Documents

Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025

Council Plan 2021-2025

Community Vision 2021-2040

Employee Code of Conduct

Equal Opportunity and Workplace Behaviours Policy

Family and Domestic Violence Policy and support documents

Flexible Working Arrangement Policy

Gender Equality Policy

Gender Impact Assessments and Associated Documents (currently being developed)

Human Resource Strategy 2017-2021 (new strategy to be developed in 2022)

Mildura Rural City Council Workforce Plan 2021-2025

Mildura Rural City Council Enterprise Agreement Number 9

Prevention of Bullying Policy

Reconciliation Action Plan

White Ribbon Accreditation

Workplace Violence Policy

Women's Health Loddon Mallee Consultation Report – November 2021

Workplace Gender Audit – as at 30 June 2021

Workplace Gender Equality Reporting & Resourcing Plan

## APPENDIX 1 - Employee Classification Levels

| Classification | Employee Level                | Examples  |
|----------------|-------------------------------|---|
| 0              | CEO                           | Chief Executive Officer   |
| -1             | Direct report to CEO          | General Managers<br>Executive Support   |
| -2             | One direct report from CEO    | Managers<br>Executive Assistants  |
| -3             | Two direct reports from CEO   | Coordinators<br>Project Officers  |
| -4             | Three direct reports from CEO | Team Leaders<br>Project Officers<br>Planners<br>Engineers<br>Environmental Health Officers<br>Maternal & Child Health Nurses<br>Youth Services Officers<br>Administration Officers<br>Civic Compliance Officers   |
| -5 & -6        | Four direct reports from CEO  | Assessment Officers<br>Library Officers<br>Immunisation Nurses<br>Community Support Workers<br>Property Maintenance<br>Child Care Educators<br>Tourism Information Officers<br>Customer Support Officers<br>Gallery & Theatre Technicians<br>Administration Support Officers<br>Plant Operators<br>Parks Maintenance / Gardeners<br>School Crossing Supervisors<br>Landfill Operators<br>Cleaners |

## APPENDIX 2 – Victorian Auditors General’s Office (VAGO) Report into Sexual harassment in Local Government

In June 2020, Mildura Rural City Council took part in a voluntary survey conducted by the Victorian Auditors General’s Office in relation to sexual harassment in the workplace. This was a sector wide survey involving 75 of the 79 Victorian Councils.

The survey asked respondents about:

- individual experiences of sexual harassment
- complaints handling
- training and policies
- views on council communication and prevention measures.

A link to the general sector wide results <https://www.audit.vic.gov.au/report/sexual-harassment-local-government> is available via the VAGO website. Results specific to Mildura Rural City Council were provided to all staff and referred to during the development of this GEAP.

A snapshot of our results are noted below:

Mildura Rural City Council results indicated, our staff are well informed and well equipped to deal with instances of sexual harassment when they arise. Our results indicated 25.6% of respondents had experienced sexual harassment at some stage (state average being 28.2%), with the most common behaviours being intrusive questions, sexually suggestive comments/jokes and staring or leering. The harassment most commonly came from co-workers and from members of the public.

Our results show that 100% of respondents know where to find our policies and processes with more than 96% of respondents knowing where to get help, how to make a complaint and about our Employee Assistance Program.

In addition 95% of our Managers and Supervisors have received sexual harassment training and indicated that they would be confident in their ability to effectively respond to a sexual harassment complaint.







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76 Deakin Avenue, Mildura

**Madden Avenue Service Centre**  
108 Madden Avenue, Mildura

**Ouyen Service Centre**  
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