

6.2.9 NOM 1064 - Gender Equality Update

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Recommendation(s)

That Council:

- Stays informed of Cardinia's commitment and progress towards Gender Equality within the organisation and the community in general.
- Adopts the Gender Equality Leadership Commitment Statement.

Attachments

Nil

Executive Summary

The People and Culture team continues working towards the implementation of the Gender Equality Act while delivering organisation-wide training.

Internal committees continue to progress gender actions.

Background

People and Culture Update

Gender Equality Act 2020

The Gender Equality Act 2020 commenced on 31 March 2021. The aim of the Act is to improve Gender Equality in the Victorian public sector, universities and local councils.

Cardinia will be required to create its first Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP). The GEAP was initially due in October 2021, however in early June the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector (Commission) revised the GEAP due date to 1st December 2021.

Gender Impact Assessments

A Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) is required to be conducted for any new policy, program or service that directly & significantly impacts the public. These assessments consider how Cardinia's work affects different people in our community.

Gender Impact Assessments are currently being conducted and will contribute to the GEAP.

Gender Survey

Cardinia has engaged the Victorian Public Service Commission to obtain the survey requirements of the Gender Audit that will contribute to the Gender Equality Action Plan.

The gender survey forms part of the annual 'People Matter Survey' with additional questions this year contributing to the data required for our Gender Audit.

This survey also investigates workplace behaviours and cultures and provides an anonymous platform for all employees to provide feedback on their experiences at Cardinia. The survey

was distributed to all staff on 31st May and closes in the first week of July (running for an extra week this year due to COVID). Results will be available in late July.

Over 30% of Cardinia Employees have now completed the survey (average response rate across all Councils is 25%)

Gender Audit

In late July the Commission will release the final Workforce Reporting Template. Using data from the People Matter Survey and information on-hand, People and Culture will complete the Gender Audit to contribute to the GEAP.

The Gender Audit will analyse 'Gender Equality Indicators' at all levels of Council including;

- Gender pay equity
- Gender composition at all levels of the workforce
- Gender composition of governing bodies
- Workplace sexual harassment
- Recruitment and promotion
- Gendered work segregation
- Leave and flexibility

Respectful Workplaces Training

After a brief pause due to COVID restrictions, Respectful Workplaces Training will recommence in July to be delivered to the few remaining employees who have not yet attended.

The LGA 2020 requires us to deliver training regularly, and while COVID restrictions proved challenging, it was important to Cardinia for this training to be delivered face-to-face.

This year it was created and delivered by the People and Culture team. Content such as bullying, harassment and conflict of interest were covered. This year the training was expanded to include relevant issues such as unconscious bias in discrimination, bystander intervention and the recommendations handed down by Victorian Auditor General's Office in light of the sexual harassment survey.

(VAGO) Sexual Harassment Survey Working Group

Following on from the Victorian Auditor General Office's report on sexual harassment in local government survey, Cardinia continues to contribute to a working group to assist the implementation of VAGO's recommendations.

This group is represented by People and Culture employees from 20 Victorian councils and meets fortnightly with the purpose to learn from one another, explore best practice approaches and to ultimately implement a well-considered and thought-out response to the VAGO Sexual Harassment report and recommendations.

Leadership Commitment Statement

Councillors and the Executive team developed a Gender Equality Leadership Commitment Statement through a guided workshop. The Commitment Statement has been finalised and a Communications Plan has been developed which began with a media release about the tabling of last month's report, and will continue with a photo opportunity for councillors at the July council meeting. Following this, there will be promotion of the adopted statement, and additional activities up to the adoption of the GEAP in December.

Our Vision (external)

We want everyone who lives, works and spends time in Cardinia Shire – regardless of their gender identity – to be treated with respect and fairness, to feel and be safe, and to have equal access to opportunities to reach their potential and pursue their dreams.

Barriers to achieving this Vision

In our homes, workplaces and across the wider community, stereotypical and outdated views of gender roles, responsibilities and capabilities can lead to inequalities.

For example, what is expected of women and girls is often different to what is expected of men and boys. This can result in imbalances in areas including domestic duties, parenting responsibilities and access to resources and opportunities.

In addition, gender diverse people are often subject to similar expectations and discrimination based on their gender identity and may feel forced to hide their gender identity as a result. They are at greater risk of mental illness, physical and verbal abuse, and exclusion.

In our community, outdated views and stereotypes that reinforce gender inequality are often due to a lack of education and awareness. This causes gender bias, both conscious and unconscious, which perpetuates inequality in our policies, practices, systems and structures.

Solutions and Call to Action

Council will continuously strive to put policies and practices in place that help to deliver gender equitable programs and services for everyone in Cardinia Shire.

We will actively listen to women, girls and gender diverse people in our community, and learn from their lived experiences to help make Cardinia Shire a safer, healthier, fairer and more equitable place for all.

We will create opportunities for women, girls and gender diverse people in our community to have a voice and inform our decision making. We will lead by example on gender equality.

Policy Implications

The Gender Equality Commission has informed defined entities that the new Local Government Act 2020 includes a requirement to develop a workforce plan every four years. The workforce plan must include measures relating to gender equality.

A Gender Equality Action Plan that meets the requirements of the Gender Equality Act, will also meet the requirements of the Local Government Act. Complying with the gender equality requirements of the Local Government Act will not satisfy the requirements of the Gender Equality Act.

Section 26 (2)(ba) of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act requires councils to specify (in their municipal public health and wellbeing plan (Cardinia Shire Liveability Plan) measures to prevent family violence and respond to the needs of victims of family violence in the local community.

Other influential gender equity legislation in the Commonwealth and Victorian State Government is:

- The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- The Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012
- The Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- The Fair Work Act 2009

Relevance to Council Plan

1.1 We empower our communities to be healthy, connected and resilient

1.1.1 Plan for, and support the delivery of, accessible health and social services that address critical gaps in provision.

1.1.3 Lead by example in creating an inclusive and welcoming community for all by facilitating community education, capacity building, connection and celebration of our diversity.

1.1.4 Facilitate a partnership approach to create safer communities.

2.1 We support the creation of liveable spaces and places

2.1.2 Plan and maintain safe, inclusive and connected open spaces, places and active travel routes.

5.1 We practise responsible leadership

5.1.1 Build trust through meaningful community engagement and transparent decision-making.

5.1.4 Maximise value for our community through efficient service delivery, innovation, strategic partnerships and advocacy.

Consultation/Communication

This report has been developed with the cooperation and collaboration of teams across Council and designated groups such as the Respect and Equity Committee.

Financial and Resource Implications

Council was required to pay approximately \$1500 to the Victorian Public Service Commission to undertake the employee People Matter Survey.

Conclusion

Cardinia has undertaken several projects to promote and progress towards Gender Equality. Cardinia will continue to do so through various projects that will positively impact Cardinia's employees as well as its residents.