



We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri People as the Custodians of this land. We also pay respects to all Aboriginal Community Elders, past and present, who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the history of this region.

This document has been written in Arial, size 12 font in order to be more accessible. Copies are available in colour and grey scale.

Seeking Help – It is against the law to hurt any member of your family or for anyone to hurt you. This includes your spouse, partner, children, parents and in-laws. Violence takes many forms including physical, sexual (including if married), threats, name calling, controlling contact with others, denying access to money, threatening or hurting pets or children witnessing abuse.

Support for women and children in the Yarra Ranges

- If in danger call, **000**
- EDVOS is the specialist family violence service in Melbourne's eastern metropolitan region,
 9259 4200
- 24 hours support hotline, Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre, 1800 015 188
- Intouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, 9413 6500
- Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault,
 9870 7330
- Child Protection Crisis Line, 1300 360 391
- Boorndawan William Aboriginal Health Service,
 9212 0200
- Lifeline, 131 114
- Women with Disabilities Victoria, 9286 7800
- Kids Helpline, 1800 551 800
- Eastern Community Legal Centre, 5962 1665

Support for men in the Yarra Ranges

- If in danger call 000
- Men's Referral Service, provided by men for men 1300 766 491
- Men's Behaviour Change Program, 1300 130 381





Gender Equity Working Group, 2017

Yarra Ranges Council proudly presents our second Gender Equity Action Plan. This action plan builds on previous work and further embeds our commitment as an organisation to creating a workplace and a community that is gender equitable.

We believe that everyone has the right to be respected and the opportunity to equally participate in and to influence decisions, thereby reaching their individual potential.

It is now understood that gender inequality is at the heart of violence against women. In order to live in a world where gender equity is the norm and gender based violence is non-existent we must challenge existing attitudes and behaviours and develop new ways of doing things. We must continually strive to ensure that we are inclusive, reflective and open to change. In order to do this, we will work in partnership with employees and the community.

This action plan which was developed by the Gender Equity Working Group is based on the results of our first ever organisation wide Gender Self Assessment. More than 400 employees and focus groups with more than 50 participants responded to the assessment. The voices of our employees have been heard through the actions and commitment in this plan. Over the next three years we will seek substantive cultural change in regards to gender and remain steadfast in our commitment to achieving a gender equitable environment.

Yarra Ranges Council: Leading gender equity in our workplace and community

PROMOTING

INITIATIVES

PROVIDING

SUPPORT

Yarra Ranges Council is committed to facilitating a gender equitable workplace and community by redressing gender inequality through reviewing and redeveloping policies, programs and processes. Gender equality is a human right and everyone, regardless of gender identity, has the right to live free from discrimination. Challenging existing assumptions about gender and gender roles is critical to achieving gender equality. In order to achieve this a cultural transformation in our organisation and community is necessary. We seek to support this transformation by promoting conversations that are fearless and to create an environment where stereotypes and rigid adherence to gender norms can be challenged safely. We are developing new ways of doing things by being inclusive in our decision making, valuing the differing needs of a diverse community and ensuring that we are reflective, learn from our mistakes and embrace evidence based best practice.

Violence against women is far too common

Preventing violence against women has traditionally been the driver for Yarra Ranges Council to address gender inequality. It is now well understood that violence against women has serious consequences for individuals and society. It occurs in every Australian community regardless of location, socio-economic and health status, age, culture, gender, sexual identity, disability, ethnicity or religion.

- On average, at least one woman a week is killed by a partner or former partner in Australia¹
- One in three Australian women has experienced physical violence, since the age of 15²
- One in four Australian women has experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner³
- One in five Australian women has experienced sexual violence⁴
- Women are five times more likely than men to require medical attention or hospitalisation as a result of intimate partner violence, and five times more likely to report fearing for their lives⁵
- Of those women who experience violence, more than half have children in their care⁶
- There is growing evidence that women with disabilities are more likely to experience violence⁷
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience both far higher rates and more severe forms of violence compared to other women⁸.

Violence against women affects all of us – it is us, our family, our friends, our colleagues and our communities

In 2015 Yarra Ranges had the second highest rate of reported family violence incidents among the seven local government areas in the Eastern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne. Police recorded 1,119 cases of reported family violence cases against women⁹ and children were present in many of these instances.

About 70 per cent of employees at Yarra Ranges Council live in the Yarra Ranges municipality. As such we are uniquely positioned to influence our community by working with our own employees to embrace gender equality and prevent violence against women.

Violence against women has consequences for individuals, their communities and broader society

At an individual level violence affects women both during times of abuse and potentially on an ongoing basis even if the abuse has stopped. It can affect almost any area of someone's life including their ability to work, their financial security in retirement, their confidence to engage with others and their feeling of safety within their homes. More than smoking or obesity, domestic and family violence is the leading preventable cause of death, disability and illness in women aged 15 to 44 years¹⁰.

More broadly, violence against women places significant pressure on our economy. Not only does it place pressure on our hospitals and emergency services but it inhibits our productivity. Violence against women and children will cost the Australian economy an estimated \$15.6 billion per year by 2021- 22 unless decisive action is taken to prevent it¹¹.

- 1. Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), 2015.
- 2. Cox, P. (2015) Violence against women: Additional analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey 2012, Horizons Research Report, Issue 1, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), Sydney; and Woodlock, D., Healey, L., Howe, K., McGuire, M., Geddes, V. and Granek, S. (2014) Voices against violence paper one: Summary report and recommendations, Women with Disabilities Victoria, Office of the Public Advocate and Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria
- 3. Cox, P. (2015) Violence against women: Additional analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey 2012, Horizons Research Report, Issue 1, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), Sydney; and Woodlock, D., Healey, L., Howe, K., McGuire, M., Geddes, V. and Granek, S. (2014) Voices against violence paper one: Summary report and recommendations, Women with Disabilities Victoria, Office of the Public Advocate and Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria
- 4. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2012
- 5. Mouzos, J. (1999) Femicide: An overview of major findings, No. 124, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra, pp. 1-6; Statistics Canada (2003) Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile 2003, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Ministry of Justice, Canada
- 6. National Crime Prevention (2001) Young people and domestic violence: National research on young people's attitudes and experiences of domestic violence, Crime Prevention Branch, Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, Canberra; and Cox (2015),
- 7. Cox, P. (2015) Violence against women: Additional analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey 2012, Horizons Research Report, Issue 1, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), Sydney; and Woodlock, D., Healey, L., Howe, K., McGuire, M., Geddes, V. and Granek, S. (2014) Voices against violence paper one: Summary report and recommendations, Women with Disabilities Victoria, Office of the Public Advocate and Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria.
- 8. For example, Indigenous women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence related assaults than non-Indigenous people. Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (2014).
- 9. Crime Statistics Agency Victoria, Family Violence Affected Family Members by LGA and sex, January 2015 to December 2015
- 10. Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), The health costs of violence: Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence (2004), p 8.
- 11. The National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, The cost of violence against women and their children (March 2009), p 4.

Make the connection – gender inequality is at the heart of violence against women

Gender inequality is now widely held to be an underlying determinant of violence against women. The connection between gender inequality and violence against women can be challenging to articulate. This is where Yarra Ranges Council can make a difference in its workforce. Since 2015 we have been referring to Women's Health Gippsland's 'Make the Link' campaign to unpack the connection between violence against women and gender inequality. Exploring the attitudes and behaviours that exist but can't easily be seen is essential to understanding the link.



While violence against women that manifests as murder, rape, sexual assault or physical assault is accepted as abhorrent, it is often difficult to shift understanding to how stereotypes, sexists jokes and adherence to rigid gender roles can contribute to this abuse. If we condone these behaviours, or indeed fail to challenge them, we become part of the broader problem. As such Yarra Ranges Council is committed to challenging these underlying causes.

Violence against women is prevalent but can be prevented

Australia has a choice. We can change the story that currently sees a woman murdered every week by a current or former partner. We can choose a future where women and their children live free from violence.¹³"

National framework: Change the story

Australia has a world first national framework that guides a consistent and integrated approach to preventing violence against women and their children. Developed by OurWatch, ANROWS and Vic Health, Change the Story brings together the latest international evidence on what drives violence against women and what works to prevent it. They found that:

^{12.} Gippsland Women's Health, Make the Link, http://makethelink.org.au/make-the-link/

^{13.} Our Watch, http://www.ourwatch.org.au/News-media/Latest-news/World-first-framework-launches-to-change-the-story

Gendered drivers are conditions or factors that predict higher rates of violence against women. These include:

- Condoning of violence against women
- Men's control of decision making and limits to women's independence in public and private life
- Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity
- Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.



Essential actions are the responses and actions which can mitigate the gendered drivers. These include:

- Challenging the condoning of violence against women
- Promoting women's independence and decision making in public life and relationships
- Fostering positive personal identities and challenge gender stereotypes and roles
- Promoting and normalise gender equality in public and private life
- Challenging the normalisation of violence as an expression of masculinity or male dominance.

The framework identified key settings where prevention work can take place including:

- Workplaces, corporations and employee organisations
- Education and care settings for children and young people
- Universities, TAFEs and other tertiary education institutions
- Sports, recreation, social and leisure spaces¹⁴
- The arts
- Health, family and community services
- Faith based contexts
- Media
- Popular culture
- Legal, justice and corrections contexts.

^{14.} Our Watch, http://www.ourwatch.org.au/News-media/Latest-news/World-first-framework-launches-to-change-the-story

Yarra Ranges Council, as the leading employer in the Yarra Ranges, will contribute to gender equality and the elimination of violence against women within a workplace setting by working directly with employees to build understanding of and commitment to gender equity.

Council is also uniquely placed to influence communities through external activities that are specific to gender equity and also by ensuring that broader programs always apply a gender lens.

Victorian Context Royal Commission into Family Violence

The Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence final report made 227 recommendations to improve the system to prevent and respond to family violence. The Victorian Government committed to implementing all recommendations¹⁵. Importantly, the findings have specific recommendations for local governments in the context of health and wellbeing plans. This includes that councils report on the measures they propose to take to reduce family violence and respond to the needs of victims in their health and wellbeing plans. This Gender Equity Action Plan outlines this commitment by Council.

Safe and Strong

Safe and Strong, Victoria's Gender Equality Strategy, sets out a framework for enduring and sustained action over time. Drawing on global evidence, this strategy aims to progressively build the attitudinal and behavioral change required to reduce violence against women and deliver gender equality.

The strategy sets out the founding reforms that set a new standard for action by the Victorian Government in areas including:

- Governance structures
- Employment practices
- Policy
- Procurement
- Funding decisions
- Advocacy to the Commonwealth Government.

15. http://files.rcfv.com.au/Reports/Final/RCFV-All-Volumes.pdf, p71

The strategy also considers six settings for statewide action in which strategic alliances and partnerships will enable shared progress towards gender equality. These include:

- Education and training
- Work and economic security
- Leadership and participation
- Health, safety and wellbeing
- Sport and recreation
- Media, arts and culture¹⁶.



Regional strategy: Together for Equality and Respect (TFER)

Yarra Ranges Council is a partner in the regional strategy Together for Equality and Respect (TFER) that was developed by Women's Health East and their partners across the region. Taking a primary prevention approach, the TFER vision is:

"A society where women live free from men's violence – where every girl and boy grows up to be equally valued, heard and respected, and with equal access to opportunities."

The strategy¹⁷ provides a platform for organisations in the Eastern Metropolitan Region to prioritise and work together on the primary prevention of men's violence against women. It is an opportunity to collaborate, share skills, knowledge and resources, avoid duplication and build the capacity of the region to promote equal and respectful relationships between men and women.

The strategy and the ensuing action plan seek to increase the capacity and political will of organisations to prevent violence against women by:

- Prioritising the prevention of violence against women as core business
- Promoting equal and respectful relationships
- · Contributing to the evidence base
- Investing in workforce development
- Strengthening partnerships.

Yarra Ranges Council is proud to actively engage in and promote each of these areas.

^{16.} Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy (2016), http://www.vic.gov.au/system/user_files/Documents/women/161108_Victorian_Gender_Equality_Strategy_ONLINE.pdf

^{17.} Together for Equality and Respect Action Plan 2013-2017, http://whe.org.au/tfer/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/06/TFER_Action-Plan-September-2015.pdf

The role of Local Government

For many years, Victorian councils have played an essential role in working to prevent violence against women. Local government is uniquely placed to play a key role in the primary prevention of violence against women as they:

- Are responsible for creating safe and healthy environments
- Have the capacity to facilitate and lead community responses
- Can role-model and promote gender equitable workplace practices
- Provide a range of community services, safe public spaces and community facilities
- Can use existing structures, relationships and infrastructure to drive change.

As recommended by the Royal Commission into Family Violence, Yarra Ranges Council outlines in our health and wellbeing plan how we seek to support prevention and response in relation to family violence.

Our experience of working towards a gender equitable future

Yarra Ranges Council has been actively involved in promoting gender equity and working to prevent violence against women.

Sept 2011 to Dec 2014

- YRC joint project with Knox and Maroondah Councils Preventing Violence against Women in Our Community (PVAWC). Raised awareness of the need to address gender inequality within our workplace and organisational change as a strategy to change PVAWC in our communities
- Cross Council OE workshop with MAV raised leaders' awareness of the prevalence of VAW and the role LG can play to address it
- Family Violence Support is included in Yarra Ranges Council Agreement, 2013
- White Ribbon and 16 Days events commence
- Key goal included in the 2013-17 Health and Wellbeing Strategy addressing Council's role in PVAW through building a culture of gender equity and respect
- You and I project and exhibition, Monbulk Respect project supported/ funded by YRC (check details).

2014

- The Gender Equity Working Group is formed comprised of senior leaders from across the organisation
- YRC partners with Knox City Council and Maroondah City Council on the Gender Lens for Leisure report
- You and I Sport YRC partnered with Inspiro and Eastern Health to develop training and resources for Football/Netball Clubs in AFL Yarra Ranges and EFL.

2015

- The YRC Gender Equity Action Plan was completed.
- Gender Equity Officer appointed, 2 days per week
- Gender is a module in the new employee induction program
- Campaign to Prevent Men's Violence Against Women is undertaken and driven by newly formed Male Champions of Change
- Program of International Women's Day events
- Gender Equity is included as a category in community grants.

910

- The Senior Management team (20 employees) completed a workshop on Preventing Violence Against Women in February 2016 facilitated by Vic Health
- Feb–March: International Women's Day Program of events
- Mar–May: Organisation wide Gender Self Assessment Completed, 457
 Employees respond to a survey and 56 attend focus groups
- Champions of Change evolves and is opened up to both women and men
- Gender Equity Working Group
 positions are opened up throughout the entire organisation
- Gender Equity Action Plan is revised based on the outcomes of the Gender Self Assessment
- November 2016 Champions of Change plans a series of events to prevent men's violence against women. The theme is 'Stand Up, Speak Out'
- YRC commenced a Gender Equity working group to coordinate Prevention of Violence Against Women and Family Violence work both internal and external
- You and I Sport launched 'Change the Game' a coaching resource for Football.
- YRC partnered with Inspiro and Eastern Health to extend on the work of 'You and I Sport' to develop a gender equity survey for football clubs in the AFL Yarra Ranges and EFL together with a forum on gender equality in sport
- YRC partners with Knox City Council and Maroondah City Council to raise awareness of gender equality in all sporting clubs by producing a media pieces highlighting success and a gender audit to initiate conversation and change towards improved gender equality in sport and recreation clubs.
- Capital grants for sporting clubs added to the capital grant guidelines that priority will be given to projects that 'Improves opportunities for female participation in the sport and recreation environment'.

WHY DO SOME ROLLS ATTRACT ONE GENDER OVER THE OTHER?



Yarra Ranges Gender Self Assessment 2016

The results of the Yarra Ranges Gender Self Assessment 2016 informed the development of this Gender Equity Action Plan.

The Gender Self Assessment showed Council is tracking strongly on female representation at Manager level (47% female and 53% male – March 2016). As is reflected more broadly in Australia, the greatest imbalance was seen at the top level where there is one female in senior management compared to three males, representing just 25 per cent of the Senior Leadership Team. The new Council (elected in 2016) saw a drop in the number of female Councillors elected to just one female (11 per cent of Councillors).

Gendered norms are visible across all levels of the organisation, including management, with far more women than men taking up flexible work options. One example of this is at SEO/EO level where 50 per cent of female employees work flexibly while only four per cent of males do.

Across the broader organisation 72 per cent of Council male employees are full-time in contrast to 27 per cent of female employees. Females are employed casually at a significantly higher rate at 21 per cent to males at 13 per cent. This limits men's opportunity to be involved in private pursuits and family responsibilities and continues to place burdens on women. Women's financial security and opportunity for development can potentially be impacted in the long term in part-time and casual roles.

Gender stereotyping around roles is ingrained within our organisational culture with 49 per cent of all employees agreeing or strongly agreeing that women are better suited to some types of work and men suited to other types of work. This is reflected across the organisation with pockets strongly represented by one gender or the other. Male employees dominate the outdoor workforce and more broadly the Environment and Engineering Directorate (71 per cent of employees are male). Females dominate the areas of Home Care, Child Care and more generally the Corporate Service Directorate (68 per cent of employees are female) and Social and Economic Development (85 per cent are female). Challenging gender stereotypes will be a key focus for this Gender Equity Action Plan.

Gender Equity Action Plan 2017-19 – Overview

Opposite is an overview of what will be achieved in the three year period 2017-19 at Council. To request the more detailed gender equity action plan ■ mail@yarraranges.vic.gov.au

Title	1. Our Commitment
Tagline	Gender equity is embedded in our values, our culture and in policies, processes and practices.
Key Actions / Outcomes	 Clear organisation statement by Council that reinforces our commitment to gender equity and the prevention of violence against women Gender equity principles and actions are embedded within the organisation and everyone is accountable through a reporting framework Employees have the skills and confidence to apply a gender lens to projects and programs Gender Self Assessment is replicated in 2018 Gender Equity Working Group, with the support of a Director as champion, continues to drive organisation change Prevention of violence against women and a culture of gender equity and respect is a goal of the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Title	2. Our community
Tagline	Gender equity principles will be mainstreamed into activities and programs that impact the community. Prevention of violence against women initiatives will be coordinated and strategic.
Key Actions	 A coordinated response to preventing violence against women in the wider Yarra Ranges community is developed External and internal work on gender equity is harmonised to ensure consistency of message, shared knowledge and positive role modelling Women and girls have equitable access and decision making opportunities in relation to council facilities, civic participation and services The Grants for Community program invites projects promoting gender equity in the community and encourages partnership approaches Women are supported to develop leadership skills and Council resources workshops leading into the next Council elections.

Title	3. Our knowledge
Tagline	Our employees have the knowledge, skills, motivation and confidence to actively champion gender equity, challenge inequality, lead by example and ultimately prevent violence against women.
Key Actions	 Gender Equity and Bystander training program using Training Of Trainer model is rolled out organisation wide – each team completed a six hour workshop Champions of Change facilitate a program of events throughout the16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women The Women's Network delivers an annual International Women's Day program The Women's Network facilitates events that support women to further their development.

Title	4. Our leaders
Tagline	Our leaders are committed to a gender equitable future where violence against women is prevented.
Key Actions	 One day gender and inclusion workshop to be included as part of the leaders training program Ongoing support for leaders with resources, advice and training opportunities Work with Corporate Leadership Team to: Develop an organisation statement of commitment on gender equality and the prevention of violence against women Identify appropriate language regarding gender and have leaders role model this language Share case studies with CLT of positive change in relation to gender equity in the workplace Envision what a gender equitable organisation looks like Create PR campaign based on Corporate Leadership Team workshop Gender Equity Working Group to benchmark other organisations and to lead discussion on gender quotas.

Title	5. Our people
Tagline	Our People and Culture processes are gender equitable and ensure a fair and supportive working environment for everyone.
Key Actions	 Strategy to increase number of women in Council's outdoor workforce is developed and implemented HR GE Strategy with actions and responsibilities identified with P&C team. Inclusive of the following: Data: Gender categories updated to include 'self identification' with open text option for people to self identify. Human Resource Management All HR forms reviewed to ensure gender sensitivity and adapted as needed All stages of recruitment process are reviewed. This will include a trial of gender blind recruitment and a question in interview process on gender equity/gender bias New position descriptions include gender equity principles Recruitment includes tag line that all positions are open to potentially being part-time, job-share or flexible (including senior managers) Reviewed job advertisement process, targeted recruitment for some positions 50 per cent of candidates for senior positions are women New employee packs include information on family violence leave provisions Pathways for reporting inappropriate behaviours in the workplace are reviewed and updated Updated processes are publicised and included in orientation training and on The Zoo Conversations held with existing managers to ensure they are aware they are able to work flexibly. Senior employees encouraged to access flexible work conditions including part-time and 48/52. Module challenging gender bias (through a practical activity) is added to existing resources to train hiring managers. Recruitment for leaders includes a process to assess understanding of and commitment to gender equity and the elimination of gender stereotyping and other forms of bias to eliminate this in all aspects of their job. Recruitment for leaders includes a process to assess understanding of and commitment to gender equity and the elimination of and commitment to gender equity and the

elimination of gender stereotyping and other forms of bias to eliminate this in all aspects of their job.

- Job descriptions in work areas that are dominated by one gender are reviewed to ensure they have a wider consideration of the skills that women and men can bring to the role.
- Ongoing encouragement from Council to access Family Violence Support
 - Included in induction and welcome packs
 - Available on Council's intranet for employees The Zoo
 - Shared at all events where EAP is shared
 - Annual reminder to managers to share and encourage employees to access if needed
- Women's Network launched as whole of organisation network
- Women are encouraged to participate in Aspiring Leaders Program and results of this program tracked
- Women are encouraged to take up secondment positions
- Women are encouraged to apply for leadership positions
- Employee Assistance Program is reviewed for suitability in responding to violence against women.

Title	6. Our message
Tagline	Our words and actions ensure a strong and consistent message of the importance of a gender equitable environment to prevent violence against women.
Key Actions	 Gender Equity Communication Strategy developed and implemented. All messaging to reinforce Change the Story, Safe and Strong and TFER strategies including: Gender equity is a root cause of VAW Violence against women and children is preventable We can all play a role in preventing Violence Against Women by challenging gender norms and stereotypes that enable Violence Against Women Celebration of Council's successes in gender equity, share stories of impact: Dissemination of information including learning resources, journals, articles to enable best practice Dissemination of Gender Equity Self Assessment Dissemination of Gender Equity Action Plan Contribute to evidence base and learnings to the wider Eastern Metropolitan Region evidence base through TFER reporting New Council Civic Centre is sensitive to gender and inclusion needs. This is reflected in all stages including consultation, planning, building and end use. YRC employees provide support to each other on how to ensure a gendered approach, best practice are shared Three Community of Practice Workshops annually.

For the full Gender Equity Action Plan 2017- 19

mail@yarraranges.vic.gov.au

