

2.1 DRAFT GENDER EQUITY FRAMEWORK

Responsible Director: Russell Hopkins

RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorses the draft 'Gender Equity Framework' for the purposes of public exhibition and community feedback for a period of four weeks during October/November 2021.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement for the draft *Gender Equity Framework* (refer **Attachment 1**) and for the Framework to be placed on public exhibition for a period of four weeks during October/November 2021.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS/ISSUES

Council has had a longstanding commitment to promoting gender equity, including through its inaugural Gender Equity Strategy and Action Plan in 2015 and implementing a number of State Government funded programs including *Community Leaders United by Sport (CLUBS)*, *Playing Fair*, *building inclusive playgroups* and piloting the *Gender Equality Act 2020* implementation.

In order to review and update the existing 2015 Gender Equity Strategy, officers have reviewed the changes to the policy landscape and best practice. The draft Gender Equity Framework is also aligned to Council's obligations under the Gender Equality Act 2020 to promote gender equality.

As gender equity actions are now embedded in Council's Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan and other Council policies, it is appropriate that we move from a Gender Equity Strategy and Action Plan to a Framework which will guide Council's work in this space, with the accompanying actions and evaluation to be embedded in the Health and Wellbeing Plan. Over time, gender equity will also be embedded across other Council plans and day to day work so that it is 'business as usual'.

CONCLUSION

The draft *Gender Equity Framework* has been prepared for Council endorsement and community consultation.

The draft Framework reflects Council's commitment to promoting gender equity in our community and to ensure that everyone enjoys the same opportunities, rights and respect, regardless of their gender.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement for the draft *Gender Equity Framework* (refer **Attachment 1**) and for the Framework to be placed on public exhibition for a period of four weeks during October/November 2021.

The final Council adoption will be sought at the January Meeting of Council following the period of public exhibition and consideration of submissions.

BACKGROUND

Council's inaugural Gender Equity Strategy was launched in 2015 and is up for review and renewal. There have been significant changes in the gender equity landscape since its inception, including the Royal Commission into Family Violence, the introduction of Victorian Government Strategies for gender equality and the commencement of the *Gender Equality Act 2020* in March 2021. There has also been a growing understanding in the last six years of the importance of intersectionality to this work. That is the acknowledgement that gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination on the basis of race, Aboriginality, religion, ethnicity, disability, age, sex, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity. There is also much strength in Council's existing Gender Equity Strategy which will be retained in the new Framework.

DISCUSSION

Gender equity is the process of being fair to people of all genders. Gender equity recognises that people may have different needs and power related to their gender and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a way that rectifies gender related imbalances. Gender equity leads to gender equality, where there are equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women, men and gender diverse people.

Council has been an advocate for gender equity for some time, including through its inaugural Gender Equity Strategy and Action Plan in 2015. Council has continued to be a leader in this space through Victorian Government funded programs such as *Community Leaders United by Sport (CLUBS)*, *Playing Fair*, *building inclusive playgroups* and piloting the *Gender Equality Act 2020* implementation. Council is also a leadership member of the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) gender equity committee and *Together for*

Equality and Respect (TFER), in addition to Council's own Gender Equity Advisory Committee (GEAC).

In order to review and update the existing 2015 Gender Equity Strategy, officers have reviewed the changes to the policy landscape and best practice. As gender equity actions are now embedded in Council's Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan and other Council policies, it is appropriate that we move from a Gender Equity Strategy and Action Plan to a Framework. This Framework will guide Council's work in this space, with the accompanying actions and evaluation to be embedded in the Health and Wellbeing Plan. Over time, gender equity will also be embedded across other Council plans and day to day work so that it is 'business as usual'.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The draft Gender Equity Framework is also in line with Council's obligations under the *Gender Equality Act 2020* to promote gender equality.

CONSULTATION

Through the most recent Health and Wellbeing Plan consultation, officers sought the views of the community on a range of gender equity matters including:

- The types of discrimination people have experienced in Monash.
- People's attitudes towards gender equity and family violence.
- People's understanding of what constitutes family violence.
- People's awareness of relevant support services.
- What Council's priority areas (i.e. settings) should be in supporting gender equity.

Along with the 375 survey participants, officers have also conducted internal consultation across the organisation. This consultation was critical given that gender equity is embedded in many services and areas of Council, and Council as a whole has an obligation to promote gender equality under the *Gender Equality Act 2020*. Officers also sought the initial views of members of Council's Gender Equity Advisory Committee (GEAC), noting that GEAC will also have other opportunities to provide feedback in future as community consultation opens up. A number of members of GEAC took the opportunity to provide feedback at this early stage.

Through this early engagement with both staff and GEAC, officers have refined the draft Gender Equity Framework. Changes of note include: the Framework is now more explicit in its recognition of people who are gender diverse or non-binary; the role of the whole of Council in delivering on gender equity has been made clearer; and sex has been included as an important intersectional consideration.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Gender Equity Framework is committed to promoting gender equity in our community and ensuring that everyone enjoys the same opportunities, rights and respect, regardless of their gender.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

The draft Gender Equity Framework is in line with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* as it seeks to ensure equality and participation in public life for people of all genders.

GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT

As this Framework is considered to have a direct and significant impact on the Monash community, a gender impact assessment (GIA) will be undertaken as part of this work. The GIA has commenced and will continue through the community consultation, including by asking for gender-disaggregated data in the survey and seeking out diverse views from advisory committees and key stakeholders. Outcomes of the GIA will be included in the final version of the Framework and subsequent report to Council. The draft Gender Equity Framework is closely aligned with Council's Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan.

CONSULTATION***Public Exhibition October/November 2021***

It is proposed that the draft *Gender Equity Framework* be placed on public exhibition for a period of four weeks during October/November 2021.

Public exhibition will include:

- Consultation with Council's Advisory Committees
- Meetings with key stakeholders
- An article in the Monash Bulletin
- Copy of the draft plan on Council's website and a community survey open to all

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Gender Equity Framework will be implemented within existing Council resources.

CONCLUSION

The draft *Gender Equity Framework* has been prepared for Council endorsement and community consultation.

The draft Framework reflects Council's commitment to promoting gender equity in our community and to ensure that everyone enjoys the same opportunities, rights and respect, regardless of their gender.

It is anticipated that the final *Gender Equity Framework* will be referred to Council for adoption at its Meeting in January 2022 after consideration of public comment.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Draft Gender Equity Framework