

2.2 GENDER EQUITY FRAMEWORK

(Author: TE)

Responsible Director: Russell Hopkins

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's endorsement of the Gender Equity Framework.

Following Council's endorsement, the Framework will become the guiding document for Council's ongoing gender equity work, including Council's policy statement.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS/ISSUES

The draft Gender Equity Framework was endorsed at the October 2021 Council meeting for public exhibition. The final version of the Framework now before Council considers and incorporates the feedback received during the consultation period.

Community feedback on the draft Gender Equity Framework was largely positive, with two negative responses, and some minor revisions suggested.

Key changes include:

- Reference to both gender and sex throughout the document.
- Adding a section on 'Framework Language' to provide Council's definition for the terms woman, man, gender diverse, and violence against women.
- Adding Recommendation 4 to "Pilot new and strengthen existing intersectional gender equity activities, particularly in relevant language/s with our multicultural and faith-based communities, and for our LGBTIQ+ communities, people with a disability, and young people and older community members".
- Improving the definition of 'advocacy' within the guiding principles.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

After taking into account community feedback, the final version of the Gender Equity Framework has been prepared for consideration by Council.

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RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorse the Gender Equity Framework.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement of the Gender Equity Framework.

Following Council's endorsement, the Framework will become the guiding document for Council's ongoing gender equity work, including Council's policy statement.

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 (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent), 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.

The draft Gender Equity Framework was endorsed at the October 2021 Council meeting for public exhibition. The final version of the Framework now before Council considers and incorporates the feedback received during the consultation period.

DISCUSSION

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 well as taking into account the views and feedback of the community.

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 through a strong policy statement, nine broad recommendations, and six guiding principles. 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 Gender Equity Framework is in line with Council's obligations under the Gender Equality Act 2020 to promote gender equality. The Gender Equity Framework is also aligned to the Monash Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025.

CONSULTATION

Consultation on the draft Framework included the following:

- Gender equity questions embedded within the Health and Wellbeing Plan community consultation.
- Internal workshops with Council staff.
- A municipal-wide online survey open for six weeks between October and November 2021 that asked people their views on the Framework generally and more specifically on the proposed policy statement, guiding principles, and recommendations.
- Workshops, focus groups and presentations with:
 - Council's Gender Equity Advisory Committee;
 - Council's LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee;
 - Council's Disability Advisory Committee;
 - Council's Multicultural Advisory Committee;
 - the Monash Multicultural and Settlement Services Network;
 - and
 - key stakeholders in community health and Prevention of Violence Against Women networks.

Opportunities to provide direct feedback were also provided to Council's Positive Ageing Reference Group, Monash Youth Reference Group, Community Grant recipients, Neighbourhood Houses and sporting clubs.

In total, approximately 500 stakeholders were actively engaged in the consultation for the Gender Equity Framework.

Overall the feedback on the Framework was positive, with two responses from individuals who did not believe Council should allocate resources to this work. A number of minor revisions and suggestions were made to improve wording particularly to ensure that the Framework was as inclusive as possible. Key changes include:

- Reference to both gender and sex throughout the document.

- Adding a section on 'Framework Language' to provide Council's definition for the terms woman, man, gender diverse, and violence against women.
- Adding Recommendation 4 to "Pilot new and strengthen existing intersectional gender equity activities, particularly in relevant language/s with our multicultural and faith-based communities, and for our LGBTIQ+ communities, people with a disability, and young people and older community members".
- Improving the definition of 'advocacy' within the guiding principles.

A summary of the feedback received through the consultation is available in Attachment 2.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Gender Equity Framework represents a commitment to promoting gender equity in our community and ensuring that people of all genders enjoy the same opportunities, rights and respect.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

The 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 the Gender Equity Framework is considered to have a direct and significant impact on the Monash community, a gender impact assessment (GIA) has been undertaken as part of this work.

Given the subject matter, gender is clearly a defining issue for this Framework which aims to consider the needs of women, men, and gender diverse people. Through undertaking the GIA, it was clear that there are relevant intersectional issues that need to be considered, and a number of changes have been made to the Framework as a result including:

- Ensuring that the Gender Equity Framework reduced the binary language that was present in the previous Gender Equity Strategy.
- Working to strike a balance between acknowledging the historical and ongoing disadvantage faced by women and gender diverse people while focusing on the benefits of gender equity to people of all genders.
- Seeking out diverse views and lived experience in the community consultation including through workshops with Council's advisory committees and others.
- Asking for gender in our demographic questions in the survey to try to better understand any gendered differences in views;

- Changing the way that the Framework refers to people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent (after seeking advice from Council's Reconciliation Action Plan consultant).
- Making explicit the need to have more meaningful engagement with people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

CONCLUSION

This version of the Gender Equity Framework has incorporated feedback from community consultation, and is before Council for endorsement.