



Gender Equality Action Plan

2021-25

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Country Fire Authority proudly acknowledges Victoria's Aboriginal communities and their ongoing strength in practicing the world's oldest living culture. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land and waters on which we live and work, and pay our respect to their Elders past and present.

This document is available in standard and Easy Read versions. If you need an alternative format, please call (03) 9262 8444 or email diversityandinclusion@cfa.vic.gov.au

Contact

For more information about the GEAP or Diversity & Inclusion at CFA, please contact Diversity and Inclusion Gender Equality Act

Message from Chief Executive Officer and Chief Officer

CFA aims to create and maintain a safe, respectful and inclusive environment that enables all people to reach their full potential and to thrive. To contribute to this objective, CFA has developed our Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP), aligned to the principles in the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, as a key step to establishing a roadmap for our diversity and inclusion journey. The strategies and actions outlined in our GEAP are designed to reduce barriers to gender equality at CFA. The plan supports our diverse workforce and forms part of the policies and practices that cultivate a culture of inclusion.

CFA plays a unique and valuable role within Victoria's emergency management sector and is an intrinsic part of our communities. We strive to be an organisation of choice for volunteers and employees, attracting people with a variety of skills, talents and approaches. Everyone at CFA contributes to the important work we undertake to protect life and property every day. Our future is tied to our community roots and our ability to evolve with changing community needs and expectations. Diversity, fairness, equity and inclusion are pivotal to our ability to make a positive difference to our communities and support them to be prepared for and safe from fire.

It's important we start foundational work now, setting a context for ongoing change and positive gender equality into the future. Our aim is to build upon this first GEAP and develop a whole-of-CFA approach which will include our volunteers.

We know that gender equality is an important social and economic expectation across our workforce and that's why we are taking steps to increase diversity and set higher standards for gender equity in our organisation. To achieve these objectives, we need proactive planning and actions that target high impact outcomes. The more we embrace diversity and equity principles and practices, the greater the opportunities for connectivity, innovation and benefit for both CFA members and the Victorian community.

CFA's GEAP is just one of many actions being undertaken to improve opportunities for all, especially those groups traditionally under-represented in the workplace. As we look to our future, we are focused on enabling a culture where all volunteers and employees are supported in making a meaningful contribution to our valued community-centred organisation and in line with our outcome framework CFA provides a great place to volunteer and work.



CEO Natalie MacDonald



Chief Officer Jason Heffernan

Scope and purpose

This Plan captures our gender equality commitments for our employees over the next four years. It outlines the findings of our Gender Equality Audit and identifies the actions we're taking to address barriers for employees. The audit was based on an analysis of employee information, in line with the requirements of the Act. The Plan therefore does not cover Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) employees seconded to CFA or our volunteers. It has been submitted to the Gender Equality Commission in line with the requirements of the *Gender Equality Act 2020*.

We recognise that many of our seconded employees hold key leadership and decision-making roles within CFA which necessarily influences our diversity and inclusion activities. We have therefore established regular discussion forums with FRV to identify opportunities to work collaboratively towards shared gender diversity outcomes.

Our intent is to replicate the baseline audit analysis with our volunteer membership in the future to further understand gender equality barriers from a volunteering perspective and to build on the current actions in this plan.



About CFA

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) is a statutory authority enshrined in legislation under the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* (CFA Act) and accountable to government for the delivery of emergency services through its paid and volunteer workforce.

On 1 July 2020, CFA underwent significant structural transformation as part of the Fire Services reform. We are now a largely volunteer firefighting service, supported by a team of dedicated corporate employees. We continue to work with agency partners and communities in preventing, preparing for, and responding to fire and other emergencies.

Our Vision and Mission

CFA Vision



Victorian communities are prepared for and safe from fire

This is our ultimate end state, and our mission and strategy are how we will deliver on this vision. It reflects our broad reach across the state and our focus on empowering communities to understand and address their fire risk.

CFA Mission



To protect lives and property

Our mission has been constant for decades. It drives how our members operate and it underpins all their work in fire prevention and preparedness activities and responding to fire and other emergencies.

With a clear vision and mission, we deliver on our important community service through a purpose driven workforce of volunteers and employees. Our impact is broad reaching and relies on strong connection to and engagement with local communities in order to fulfil our vision and mission.

CFA's role in safeguarding human life and property has built trust in both rural and metropolitan communities across the state. It's our mission that inspires members to volunteer and underpins the way we work to support prevention, preparedness and response to fire and other emergencies.

Our values

CFA is a values-driven organisation. Our values outline how we work together and underpin our approach to engaging with local communities. We put **safety** first, we excel through **teamwork**, we apply **adaptable** approaches to challenging situations while acting with **integrity** and **respect** in our service-related activities.

Our commitment to a positive organisational culture

CFA's commitment to cultural transformation includes application of more inclusive work practices, processes and principles to ensure every volunteer and employee member feels valued and experiences fairness, equity and a sense of belonging. These actions encourage attraction and retention of new members from diverse backgrounds, enriching our workplace and broader communities. A key component of CFA's cultural change continues to be gender equality.

The Gender Equality Act (2020)

An important milestone for gender equality in Victoria was achieved with the commencement of the *Gender Equality Act 2020* (the Act) on 31 March 2021.

The Act promotes gender equality by requiring the Victorian public sector, local councils and universities ('defined entities') to take positive action towards achieving workplace gender equality and requiring these organisations to consider and promote gender equality in their policies, programs and services.

The Act also recognises 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.

Under the Act our obligations include:

- promoting gender equality
- undertaking gender impact assessments on any new policy, service or program that has a direct and significant impact on the public
- completing workplace gender audits
- developing and implementing a Gender Equality Action Plan
- providing progress reports to the Gender Equality Commissioner.



What is gender equality?

The *Victorian Gender Equality Act (2020)* defines this as 'equality of rights, opportunities, responsibilities and outcomes between persons of different genders.'

For us this means creating a workplace that redresses disadvantage, addresses stigma, stereotyping, prejudice and violence, and accommodates equal access of opportunities and resources to all our members irrespective of their sex.

What is intersectionality?

Intersectionality, as defined by the Victorian Government, refers to the ways in which different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation. This may include gender, Aboriginality, sexual orientation, gender identity, among other aspects of a person's identity.

How do we define gender?

Sex and gender are different concepts.

Sex is the anatomical make-up of a person and includes male, female and intersex. Sexuality is not based on a person's sex or gender, yet sexuality is often confused as an attribute of a particular gender or sex.

Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially and culturally constructed. This includes feelings, norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a socio-cultural construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time.

Gender can intersect with other factors of discrimination, such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, age, geographic location, gender identity and sexual orientation, among others. This is referred to as intersectionality.

(Adapted from WHO: https://www.who.int/health-topics/gender#tab=tab_1)



CFA Kingston Fire Brigade volunteer, Trace Williams, helpfully describes the fluidity of gender as feelings and behaviours.

"In its simplest form, these feelings and behaviours range from tendencies associated with social stereotypes, from very masculine at one end to very feminine at another end. There are numerous feelings from one end of this scale to the other. People often choose a position within this scale to suit their entire life; some may change their position on just one or on several occasions and then there are people who choose not to be bound by the social construct of this scale for one or a number of events or their entire life. To this end they are referred to as being non-binary."

Our gender equality journey so far

CFA continues to have a significant focus on building a safe, inclusive and respectful workplace and organisation. Our ongoing commitment to gender equality is integral to achieving these outcomes.

We have:

- established an Allies of Inclusion Network which is open to all members, with the express purpose to provide support and advocacy for CFA members who belong to groups that are traditionally under-represented within CFA and society more broadly
- established state and regional Inclusion and Fairness Councils
- provided many training opportunities including active bystander training, LGBTIQ+ awareness, allyship workshops and inclusive leadership development programs
- recognised diversity and inclusive awareness days and events
- joined and worked in best-practice partnerships with organisations including Diversity Council of Australia, Pride in Diversity, Australian Network on Disability, Equal Employment Opportunity Network (EEON) and Gender and Disaster Australia.

CFA has also introduced new Behavioural Standards to clearly define behavioural expectations and respectful ways of working. We are continuing to address current and legacy workplace grievances by developing an efficient and effective complaints handling process underpinned by clear guidelines for resolution. We are also expanding mediation services to resolve workplace issues more quickly while providing a safe environment to hold constructive conversations.

Further progress has also been achieved with the development of the CFA Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-25 which identifies five key focus areas:

- Build leadership, accountability, and engagement
- Foster respectful, safe, and inclusive brigades and workplaces that are free from bullying, harassment, discrimination, and victimisation
- Educate all members on inclusive behaviours from senior leaders to our newest volunteer
- Reflect the community we serve in our brigades and workplaces
- Embed diversity, equity and inclusion principles into end-to-end talent management processes including recruitment, onboarding, selection, and retention.

CFA's commitment to gender equality is an integral part of our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. Our aim is for volunteers and employees of all genders to feel safe, valued, heard and included.



Baseline audit analysis

In accordance with the requirements of the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, CFA completed a baseline gender audit and analysis of our paid workforce for the period of 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021. The audit consisted of analysis of two components – our workforce data and our People Matter survey results.

The audit explored our current state against the seven gender equality indicators in the Act:

1. Gender composition at all levels of the workforce
2. Gender composition of governing bodies
3. Gender pay equity
4. Workplace sexual harassment
5. Recruitment and promotion
6. Leave and flexibility
7. Gendered workforce segregation.

Summary of key insights

The following is a summary of key insights from our employee¹ audit analysis for the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

Composition

- Comprising 1,136 employees, women represent 59 per cent and men 41 per cent of CFA's workforce².
- Women occupy 39.2 per cent of CFA's leadership roles³.
- Women are predominantly in clerical and administrative roles, as well as managerial and professional roles.
- CFA's Board has an equal number of men and women

Remuneration

- CFA's median annualised base salary gap is 2.9 per cent and the median total remuneration gap is 1.9 per cent.
- The overall gender pay gap between men and women's mean annualised base salary is 10.3 per cent and the total mean remuneration is 9.1 per cent.

Recruitment and promotion

- Women represented 60 per cent of new hires in 2020-21.
- Equally, women accounted for 70 per cent of overall exits for the same period.
- Women comprised 67 per cent of promotions and 63 per cent of higher duties opportunities.

Negative behaviours

- While there were no formal complaints of sexual harassment from employees, 8 per cent of People Matter survey respondents indicated they had experienced a form of sexual harassment in the previous 12 months.

1 CFA's employees comprise staff employed under Executive contracts, the Professional, Technical and Administrative (PTA) Agreement and the District Mechanical Officers and Tower Overseers (DMO & TO) Agreement. Data does not include labour hire contractors.

2 Although part of CFA's workforce, FRV secondees are excluded from CFA's gender equality audit data. Secondee data is captured by FRV in line with the requirements of the Act.

3 For the purpose of the GEAP, leadership roles comprise all positions from CEO to PTA 6 and DMO 6 classifications. PTA classification level descriptors, a sample of position descriptions and HR delegations were used to determine this definition.

Flexible work

- More women accessed parental leave (79 per cent) than men (21 per cent).
- Carers' leave was accessed by 65 per cent of women and 35 per cent of men.
- Most flexible work arrangements are negotiated and managed informally between employees and their manager so are not recorded centrally.
- People Matter survey data indicates that 75 per cent of respondents feel positive about accessing workplace flexibility arrangements.

Systems

- CFA's HR systems capture limited intersectional employee data.



Indicator 1. Gender composition at all levels of the workforce

As at 30 June 2021, CFA's workforce comprised 1,136 employees with 59 per cent women and 41 per cent men. Our current HR systems do not allow an option to identify as self-described.

Table 1. Gender composition by employment basis, 30 June 2021

Employment basis	All	Women	Men
Full-time permanent/ongoing	647	373 (58%)	274 (42%)
Full-time contract (fixed-term)	166	91 (55%)	75 (45%)
Part-time permanent/ongoing	93	85 (91%)	8 (9%)
Part-time contract (fixed-term)	37	29 (78%)	8 (22%)
Casual	193	90 (47%)	103 (53%)
Total	1136	668 (59%)	468 (41%)

Table 1 shows that there are more women (57 per cent) in full-time positions (ongoing and fixed-term combined) compared to men (43 per cent). There is significantly greater representation of women in part-time positions, both ongoing and fixed term (88 per cent) as opposed to men (12 per cent). This may suggest that women are more likely to have carer responsibilities which is better accommodated by part-time working hours. This data reinforces the importance of CFA continuing to offer and support a range of flexible working arrangements as an enabler of gender equality outcomes.

Figure 1. Gender composition by classification – CFA identified leadership roles, 2020-21

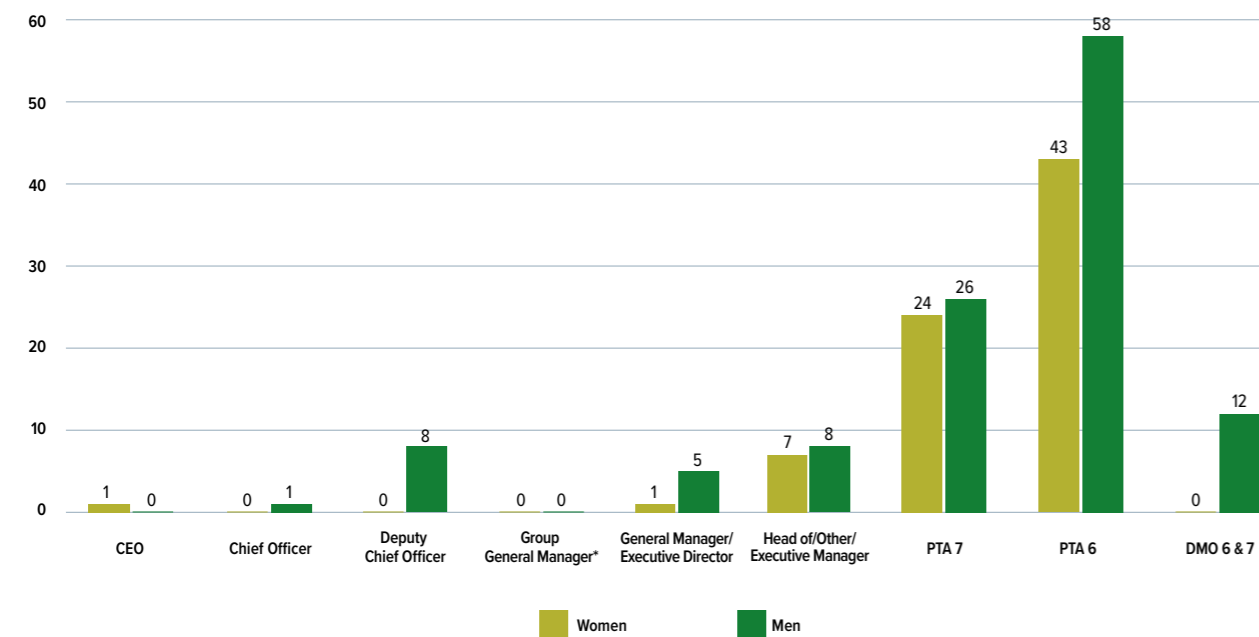


Figure 1 captures the spread of gender by classification level. Of note, all DMO and TO roles are occupied by men reflecting the lack of women in these occupational groups. CFA's organisational realignment and recruitment to senior leadership roles had commenced in May 2021. Since the gathering of data for this report as of January 2022, we have two additional women Deputy Chief Officers and two women Group General Managers.

Figure 2. Gender composition by classification – all other employees, 2020-21

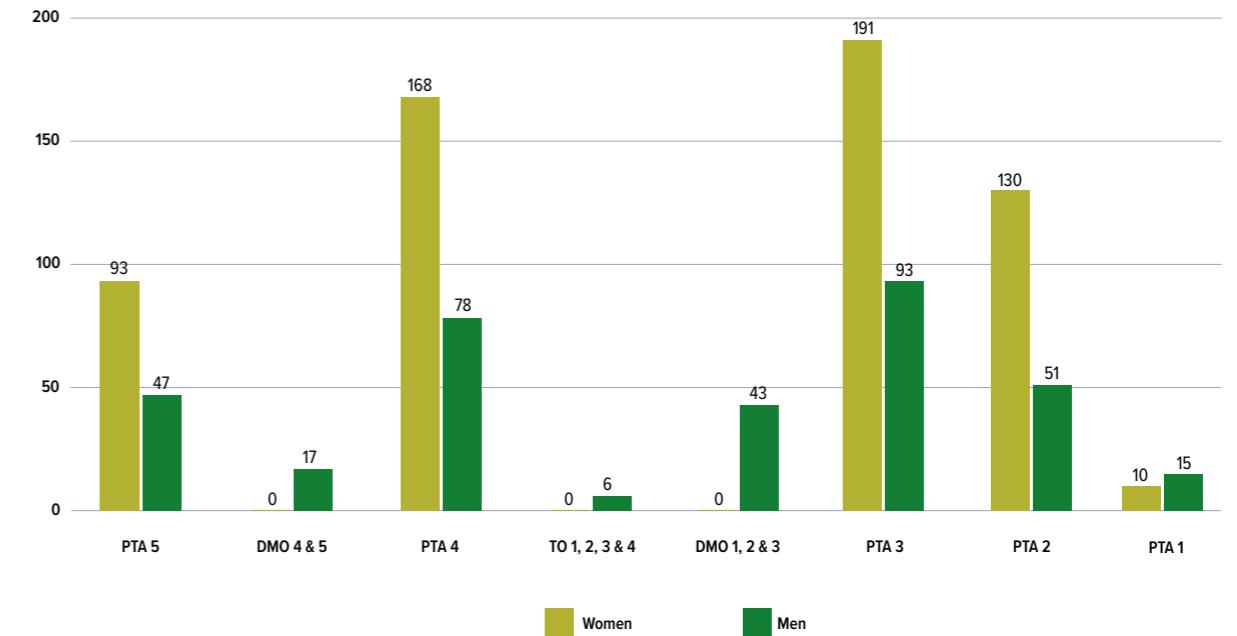


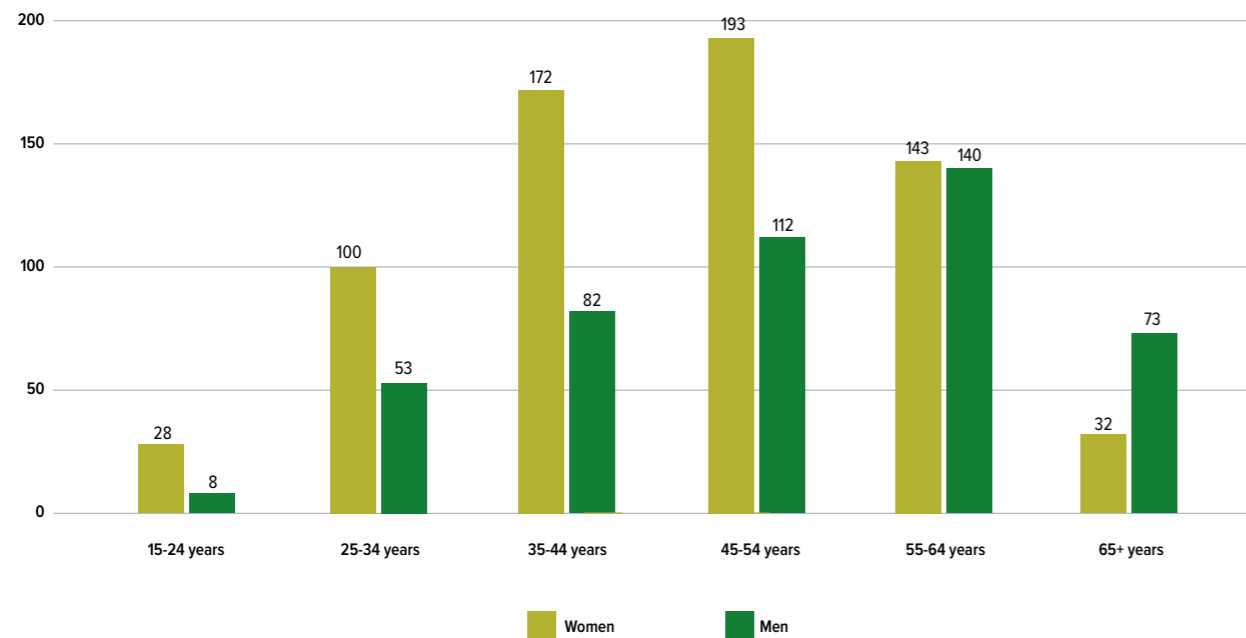
Figure 2 shows more women than men in roles at PTA 2 to PTA 5.

There is a noticeable change in gender composition post PTA 5 classification, with 39.2 per cent of women in all identified CFA leadership roles⁴ (Figure 1). There are fewer women than men at each of these classification levels except CEO. The greatest differences in gender balance occurs at PTA 6, Executive Director and Deputy Chief Officer classifications (although this has improved with organisational realignment as of August 2021), which possibly reflects key career transition points.

Although women represent 39.2 per cent of identified leadership roles, there is a significant gender imbalance when we overlay secondees from Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV). These employees hold key leadership and decision-making roles in CFA and include Assistant Chief Fire Officers and Commanders. CFA is working in partnership with FRV to influence an increase of women into these roles. As of 25 May 2021, of the 283 FRV secondees, just ten (3.5 per cent) were women.

⁴ For the purpose of the GEAP, leadership roles comprise all positions from CEO to PTA 6 and DMO 6 classifications.

Figure 3. Gender composition by age, 2020-21



CFA's workforce spans many generations (Figure 3). The gender composition of the workforce changes across the age brackets. Women have a stronger representation compared with men in the 35-44 years and 45-54 years age groupings. Over 45 per cent of men in CFA are aged 55+ years, with over 15 per cent 65+ years. This highlights the importance of identifying CFA's future talent pool, ensuring a robust transition to retirement program with a significant focus on knowledge transfer and developing enhanced approaches to succession planning and broader workforce management.

Gender composition – intersectional data

CFA's current HR systems restrict the information we can collect and report in relation to the diversity of our workforce. Currently we are limited to reporting female/male, age and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity. However, our People Matter survey data provides some additional insights with respect to gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, cultural and linguistic diversity.

The 2021 People Matter survey had an overall response rate of 50 per cent. Of these responses:

- 56 per cent of respondents identified as women, 30 per cent identified as men, 1 per cent identified as non-binary and/or use a different term and 13 per cent selected 'prefer not to say'
- 5 per cent identify as LGBTIQ+ (14 per cent preferred not to say)
- 6 per cent identify with having disability (10 per cent preferred not to say)
- 1 per cent identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (7 per cent preferred not to say)
- 9 per cent speak a language other than English with their family or community (8 per cent preferred not to say)
- 13 per cent indicate they were born overseas, with 79 per cent indicating they were born in Australia (10 per cent preferred not to say).

We continue to look for opportunities to expand our people insights through improved systems and practices to enhance measurement of inclusion across our workforce. A key component will be tracking experiences by gender, disability, cultural background, LGBTIQ+ and other relevant diversity dimensions.

With respect to other aspects of diversity and potential areas of exclusion, discrimination or disadvantage, there is work to be done to build our understanding of diversity and culture of inclusion. 58 per cent of men and 57 per cent of women respondents agree that there is a positive culture in relation to age. Only 50 per cent of men and 48 per cent of women believe there is a positive culture in relation to employees who identify as LGBTIQ+. This is a similar response in relation to perceptions or experiences of a positive culture in relation to employees with disability (43 per cent and 36 per cent of men and women respondents agreeing respectively) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (47 per cent of men and 45 per cent of women respondents agreeing). There is a slightly more positive response to perceptions of a positive culture in relation to employees from varied cultural backgrounds with 62 per cent of men and 51 per cent of women respondents agreeing.

Key action one: Continue to strive for gender balance at all levels of leadership

Key action two: Build awareness and understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion through tailored communication and education.

Key action three: Explore opportunities to improve data collection so intersectional experiences are considered.

Key action four: Develop an approach to workforce planning that supports diversity in talent identification, talent management and succession planning.

Indicator 2: Gender composition of governing body

CFA's Board⁵ has an equal number of men and women. The Board has a strong commitment to achieving gender equality.

Key action five: Improve visibility of gender diversity and inclusion data across the organisation including the Board.

⁵ CFA does not have control over the composition of the Board.

Indicator 3: Gender pay gap

CFA has an overall mean gender pay gap between men and women's annualised base salary of 10.3 per cent and a mean total remuneration gap of 9.1 per cent. This is similar to the average pay gap for the Victorian Public Sector of 10.7 per cent. At CFA, the median gap for all annualised base salaries is 1.8 per cent and for total remuneration is 9.1 per cent.

Key action six: Conduct a gender pay gap audit on an annual basis and respond to anomalies

Indicator 4: Workplace sexual harassment

In 2020-21, CFA did not receive any formal complaints of sexual harassment from employees. However, the People Matter survey indicates that 8 per cent of all respondents have personally experienced sexual harassment. 9 per cent of women respondents and 2 per cent of men respondents said that they personally experienced sexual harassment in the 12 months preceding the People Matter survey.

Only 44 per cent of women respondents believe that CFA takes steps to eliminate bullying, harassment, and discrimination, compared to 51 per cent of men. Similarly, only 45 per cent of women respondents agree that they feel safe to challenge inappropriate behaviour at work compared to 56 per cent of men. 73 per cent of men agree that CFA encourages respectful workplace behaviours compared to 67 per cent of women.

CFA is committed to significantly improving our culture and creating an environment that enables employees to feel safe, speak up and report harassment and discrimination. New behavioural standards have been developed to ensure we interact with each other in ways that support our cultural transformation objectives. This will be complemented further by development of a

Capability Framework and leadership development program for volunteers and employees that will highlight expectations for respectful and inclusive behaviour.

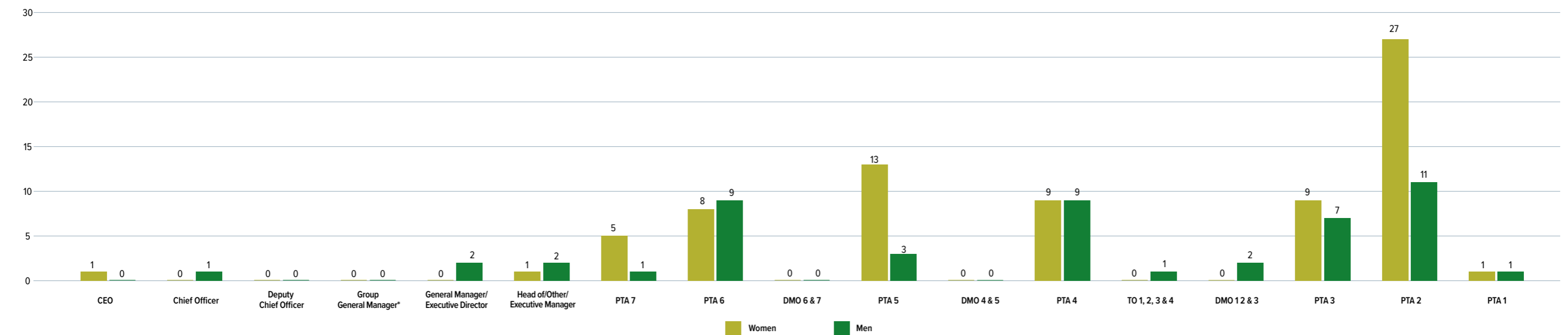
We are addressing current and legacy workplace complaints by developing an efficient and effective complaints handling processes supported by clear guidelines for resolution. Mediation services are also being expanded to facilitate constructive conversations to support timely dispute resolution.

Key action seven: Educate the workforce on the expectations for respectful and inclusive behaviour as well as the updated processes and guidelines for reporting sexual harassment.

Key action eight: Build the capability and support people managers to create a psychologically safe working environment where everyone feels safe to speak up.



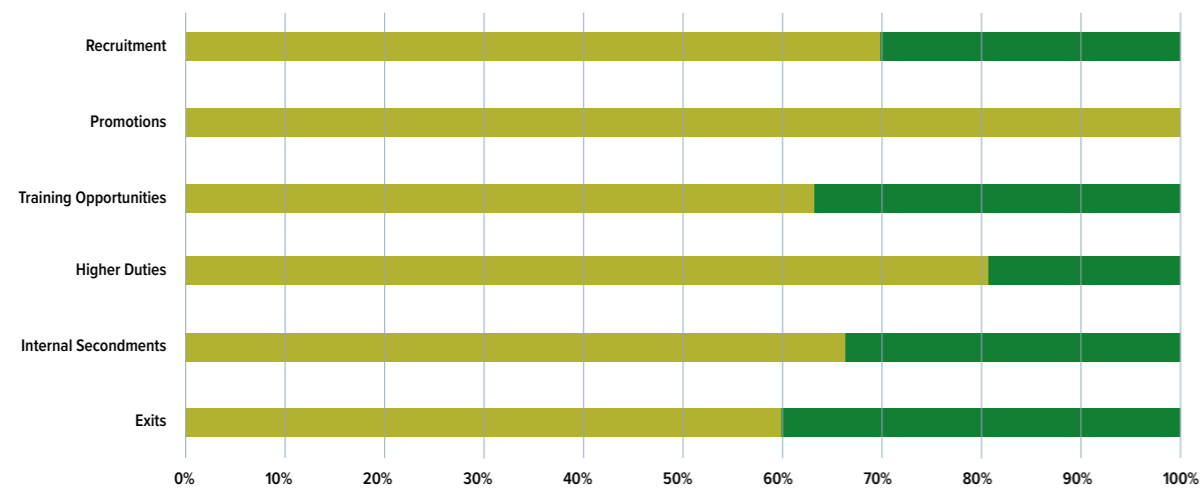
Figure 4. Composition of people recruited by gender and classification level, 2020-21



Indicator 5: Recruitment and promotion

Women represented 60 per cent of all new hires in 2020-21 and 53.8 per cent of appointments to identified leadership roles.

Figure 5. Recruitment, promotions and exits, 2020-21



However, during this same period, women represented 70 per cent of exits, with the majority being employees on fixed-term contracts. Women represented 67 per cent of promotions, 63 per cent of higher duties opportunities and 81 per cent of those undertaking professional development opportunities.

Areas requiring attention include equity and fairness experiences with reference to recruitment and promotion decisions. The People Matter survey highlights an opportunity to strengthen our recruitment and promotion policy and practices. Only 30 per cent of women respondents and 38 per cent of men respondents agree that CFA makes fair recruitment and promotion decisions, based on merit. Equally, only 34 per cent of women respondents and 36 per cent of men respondents agree they have equal chance at promotion at CFA. However, while 64 per cent of men respondents agree that gender is not a barrier to success in CFA, this view is not shared by women respondents, with only 48 per cent agreeing. This differential highlights the importance of targeting unconscious gender bias in our action plans.

Men reflect more favourable perspectives than women across a range of diversity dimensions. 58 per cent of men and only 47 per cent of women respondents agree that being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander is not a barrier to success in CFA. Similar responses relate to other diversity groups – 71 per cent of men and 54 per cent of women respondents agree that cultural background is not a barrier; 64 per cent of men and 55 per cent of women respondents agree sexual orientation is not a barrier to success.

Slightly more favourable responses relate to age not being a barrier to success with 63 per cent of men and 56 per cent of women agreeing. However, the lowest agreement threshold identified only 50 per cent of men and 40 per cent of women agree that disability is not a barrier to success. These results reflect a clear need to foster awareness, understanding and analysis about access to career opportunities and key diversity attributes that can impact and inhibit success at CFA.

Key action nine: Embed diversity and inclusion principles into our recruitment and promotion processes.

Indicator 6: Leave and flexibility

In 2020-21, 4 per cent of women and 1.5 per cent of men accessed parental leave. A total of 263 employees access carers' leave during 2020-21 comprising 65 per cent women and 35 per cent men. This suggests an opportunity exists to ensure that men are aware of our parental and carers' leave provisions.

The number of employees formally accessing family violence leave was less than 1 per cent. However, 69 per cent of men and 74 per cent of women respondents to the People Matter survey believe CFA would support them if they needed to take family violence leave.

Most flexible work arrangements at CFA are managed, reviewed and recorded at the local team level and negotiated between employee and manager. This includes a range of flexible options such as flexible start and finish times.

People Matter survey responses indicate flexibility is an area of strength for CFA. 79 per cent of women and 77 per cent of men respondents agree they have the flexibility to manage work along with non-work activities and responsibilities. 80 per cent of women and 74 per cent of men respondents agree that if they requested a flexible work arrangement it would be given due consideration. 75 per cent of women and 78 per cent of men respondents agree that CFA supports employees with family or caring responsibilities regardless of gender.

Although responses were lower in relation to flexible work arrangements, caring and family responsibilities not being a barrier to success in CFA, they were all consistently above the comparator group. 55 per cent of women and 60 per cent of men agree that flexible work arrangements are not a barrier to success, 54 per cent of women and 61 per cent of men agree that having caring responsibilities is not a barrier to success and 57 per cent of women and 64 per cent of men agree that having family responsibilities is not a barrier to success in CFA.

Key action ten: Continue to support flexible working options in ways that meet business needs.

Key action eleven: Embed gender equality principles into key people policies commencing with family violence leave and parental leave.

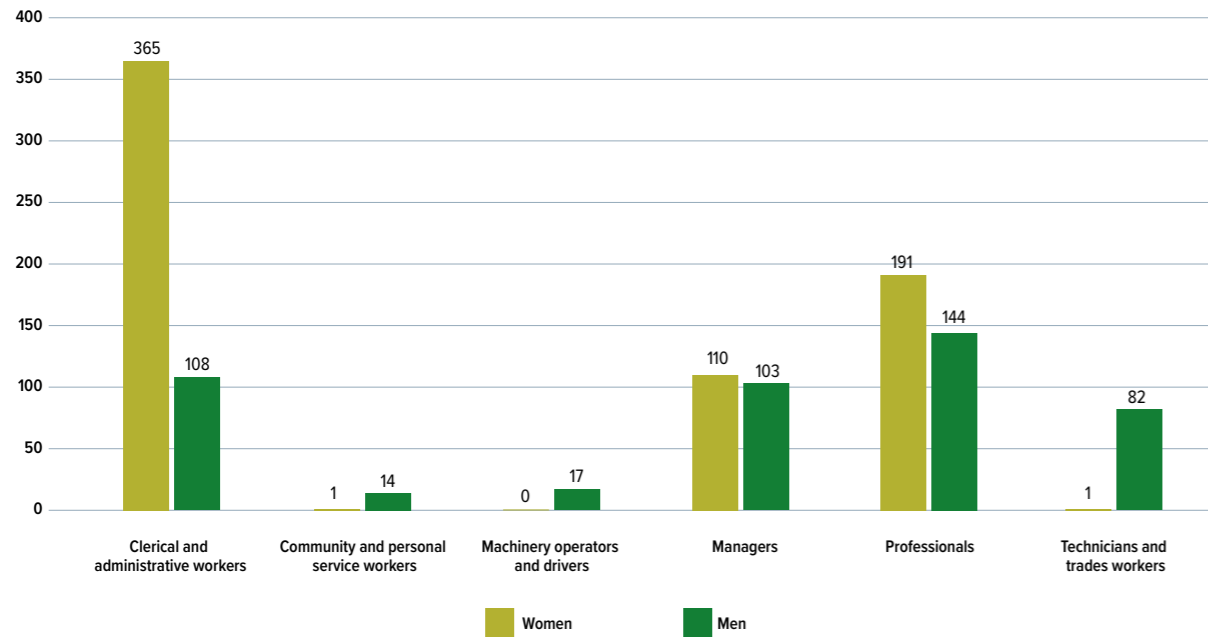
Meaningful consultation and engagement

Indicator 7: Workplace gender segregation

At CFA, women are predominantly in clerical, administrative, managerial and professional roles.

Across technicians and trades, machinery operators, drivers and community personal service workers, our gender composition follows traditional occupational segregation with only two women and 113 men.

Figure 6. Role Segregation as at 30 June 2021



We acknowledge that improving gender diversity across all functions is important to reduce workplace situations where there is only one woman in a team. No member has identified as self-described gender. Research by McKinsey & Company shows that when there is only one woman in the room or in a team, they are more likely to experience micro-aggressions, harassment and discrimination than women who work with other women⁶.

Responses in the 2020-21 People Matter survey indicate that 79 per cent of men and 75 per cent of women respondents agree that CFA uses inclusive and respectful images and language in its workplaces. 84 per cent of men and 79 per cent of women respondents agree that work is allocated fairly in their work group, regardless of gender. Conversely, 65 per cent of men and only 52 per cent of women agree that there is a positive culture within CFA in relation to employees of different genders.

While we need to consider opportunities to attract different genders to non-traditional roles, we equally need to identify opportunities to retain them – from providing the right facilities, ensuring an equitable allocation of work, through to creating a positive working environment in which they will be supported to thrive.

Key action twelve: Work towards reducing gender segregation.

⁶ www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/gender-equality/one-is-the-loneliest-number

This is CFA's inaugural Gender Equality Action Plan. It has been created in consultation with our employees and has been guided by our Gender Equality Project Control Group chaired by our CEO

Creating awareness and understanding themes, perspectives, experiences and ideas from our people has been central to our consultation approach.

Throughout the development of this plan, consultation and engagement has included:

- A dedicated intranet communication hub.
- A dedicated email address for employees to ask questions or provide feedback.
- CEO briefings to members via our newsletter.
- Team briefings on the requirements of the Act and the development of additional resources to support further learning.
- Facilitation of five focus groups during August 2021, attended by a total of 53 employees (39 women and 14 men), to capture insights from the workforce data audit results and to identify barriers and opportunities.
- Focus group sessions included employee bargaining and industrial group representatives.
- Facilitation of an additional four focus groups in January 2022, attended by 45 employees (32 women and 13 men) to test and validate the opportunities and actions identified within the draft GEAP.
- An anonymous survey/feedback form open to all employees with ten responses received.
- Sharing the draft action plan and gathering additional feedback from across CFA.
- Engaging our Gender Equity Working Group in conversations relating to gender equality.
- Briefings with the Executive team and the Board at various points as the development of the GEAP progressed.



Case for change

CFA is a well-known and respected community-based fire and emergency services organisation. Our strategic goals emphasise a community-centred approach with everything we do. That focus includes our own CFA community as we work to progress our cultural transformation creating positive experiences for all and facilitating a great place to volunteer and work.

Equally, CFA plays an important role in shaping services and policies impacting gender equality in the community. Our actions potentially impact the millions of Victorians we support to prevent and prepare for fires. This creates a significant opportunity to role model gender equality within our communities.

Our extensive consultation process has affirmed gender equality as an important social and economic expectation across our workforce. To achieve our gender equity and broader diversity goals, we need proactive planning and actions that target high impact outcomes. The more we embrace diversity and equity principles the greater the levels of innovation, skills and opportunities to enhance our community service work and continue to remain valued and relevant to all Victorians.

There is considerable evidence and research, particularly with respect to gender diversity, showing that diverse organisations perform more effectively and successfully than those with more homogeneous workforces. Diversity leads to greater innovation and improved problem solving, enabling organisations to be more flexible, agile and provide improved products and services. Everyone benefits from gender equality. It is a human right and makes our communities safer and healthier. Gender equality also helps prevent violence against women and girls.

Our commitment

CFA is committed to creating respectful, safe and inclusive environments for all members. We are committed to embedding an equitable and intersectional approach into everything we do to enable all CFA members and our communities to thrive.

It is acknowledged that gender equity initiatives are dependent on their integration with broader, organisation-wide cultural programs of work that reinforce and support diversity and inclusion objectives. The GEAP will integrate with concurrent cultural work to ensure alignment of language, activities and outcomes.

Our vision statement for gender equality at CFA

- We achieve a level of organisation wide understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion that sets the foundations for a supportive environment for all genders.
- All CFA members recognise that gender equality benefits everyone.
- All CFA members contribute to a respectful, safe and inclusive environment where all genders have access to equal opportunities and resources.

From our consultation, our employees highlighted the following benefits of gender equality at CFA:

- ✓ We need to reflect the community we serve.
- ✓ Gender equality benefits everyone.
- ✓ Greater diversity leads to better decisions.
- ✓ We will attract and retain more diverse people.
- ✓ Equality is a basic human right.

Strategies and measures

Our audit analysis, combined with feedback from our consultation process, highlights 12 key opportunities based on the Gender Equality indicators.

These opportunities are:

1. Continue to strive for gender balance at all levels of leadership.
2. Build awareness and understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion through tailored communication and education.
3. Explore opportunities to improve data collection so intersectional experiences are considered.
4. Develop an approach to workforce planning that supports diversity in talent identification, talent management and succession planning.
5. Improve visibility of gender diversity and inclusion data across the organisation including the Board.
6. Conduct a gender pay gap audit on an annual basis and respond to anomalies.
7. Educate the workforce on the expectations for respectful and inclusive behaviour as well as the updated processes and guidelines for reporting sexual harassment.
8. Build the capability and support people managers to create a psychologically safe working environment where everyone feels safe to speak up.
9. Embed diversity and inclusion principles into our recruitment and promotion processes.
10. Continue to support flexible working options in ways that meet business needs.
11. Embed gender equality principles into key people policies commencing with family violence leave and parental leave.
12. Work towards reducing gender segregation.

To ensure cohesion between the Gender Equality Action Plan and CFA's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, these opportunities have been mapped to the five key focus areas of our Strategy:

1. Build leadership, accountability and engagement.
2. Foster respectful, safe and inclusive brigades and workplaces that are free from bullying, harassment, discrimination, and victimisation.
3. Educate all members on inclusive behaviours from senior leaders to our newest volunteer.
4. Reflect the community we serve in our brigades and workplaces.
5. Embed diversity, equity and inclusion principles into end-to-end talent management processes including recruitment, onboarding, selection and retention.

Our Gender Equality Action Plan outlines our key actions based on the opportunities identified through our workforce gender audit and consultation processes. There are additional initiatives in our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-25 that are well underway that also further support this plan.

GENDER EQUALITY INDICATOR	KEY ACTIONS FROM AUDIT ANALYSIS AND CONSULTATION PROCESS	PRIORITY INITIATIVE	YR. 1 ENDING 2022	YR. 2 ENDING 2023	YR. 3 ENDING 2024	YR. 4 ENDING 2025	OWNER	HOW WE WILL MEASURE PROGRESS
Gender composition	1. Continue to strive for gender balance at all levels of leadership.	1.1 Aim for gender balance for internal and external recruitment shortlists for leaderships roles					People and Culture	Gender composition of shortlists for internal and external leadership positions
		1.2 Design and implement people development programs, including sponsorship and mentoring programs					People and Culture Organisational Development	People development program including a sponsorship/mentoring program developed and implemented for identified groups
		1.3 Include diversity and inclusion KPIs in all people manager performance plans					People and Culture	Completed with all leader performance assessments and plans referencing inclusion KPIs
	2. Build awareness and understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion through tailored communication and education	2.1 Develop and implement an education and communication campaign that identifies behavioural expectations of all employees and supports our cultural transformation					People and Culture	Completion of Behavioural Standards program Integration of Behavioural Standards into capability framework
		2.2 Continue to develop and deliver a capability framework that identifies the behavioural-based knowledge, skills and attributes required to build inclusive practices within CFA					People and Culture	Delivery of capability framework that integrates with an Inclusive Leadership program which comprehensively addresses inclusive practices, biases, wellbeing and personal safety requirements Diversity and inclusion education identified in PPR and workplans
		2.3 Provide inclusive leadership development and education to all leaders, with a focus on unconscious gender biases, gender stereotyping, intersectionality and psychological safety.					People and Culture	Inclusive leadership development and education delivered to all leaders
		2.4 Provide inclusive language education for policy and process developers					All Business Units	Inclusive language education provided
	3 Explore opportunities to improve data collection so intersectional experiences are considered	3.1 Continue to promote, engage and encourage participation in People Matter survey					People and Culture	Increase of 1 per cent in the People Matter survey response rate
		3.2 Explore options and implement systems to capture diversity demographic data of employees on a regular basis so it can be tracked over time. (Overlay gender measures by cultural background, disability, sexual orientation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reporting)					People and Culture	Identification of key systems and mechanisms which enable monitoring and reporting of key employee demographic data on a scheduled basis
	4 Develop an approach to workforce planning that supports diversity in talent identification, talent management and succession planning	4.1 Review, develop and evaluate new and existing transition to retirement process					People and Culture	Review process completed and recommendations outlined for knowledge sharing.
		4.2 Develop an approach to determine CFA's talent pool					People and Culture	Talent identification and management approach developed
		4.3 Review past succession planning activities to inform future options					People and Culture	Review conducted
	Governing body	5 Improve visibility of gender diversity and inclusion data across the organisation including the Board	5.1 Create and provide an organisation wide diversity and inclusion dashboard to the Board on a quarterly basis to enable regular review of gender equality progress					People and Culture Business Intelligence
5.2 Communicate diversity and inclusion data across the organisation							People and Culture Business Intelligence	Quarterly reporting on diversity and inclusion data across the organisation

GENDER EQUALITY INDICATOR	KEY ACTIONS FROM AUDIT ANALYSIS AND CONSULTATION PROCESS	PRIORITY INITIATIVE	YR. 1 ENDING 2022	YR. 2 ENDING 2023	YR. 3 ENDING 2024	YR. 4 ENDING 2025	OWNER	HOW WE WILL MEASURE PROGRESS
Gender Pay Gap	6. Conduct a gender pay gap audit on an annual basis and respond to anomalies	6.1 Conduct a gender pay-gap audit at a like-for-like and organisational level on an annual basis, including commencement salaries, and respond to any anomalies					People and Culture	Gender pay gap reduced
	Sexual harassment	7. Educate the workforce on the expectations for respectful and inclusive behaviour as well as the updated processes and guidelines for reporting sexual harassment	7.1 Provide regular, compulsory learning opportunities to reinforce behavioural standards for all employees to assist with the prevention of bullying, harassment, discrimination, victimisation and intimidatory behaviour. This will include the updated processes for reporting sexual harassment (see 2.2, 8.1 and 12.1)					People and Culture
7.2 Expand data collected for sexual harassment complaints to include the workplace gender audit measures							People and Culture	Reporting all required categories for the Workplace Gender Audit
7.3 Provide learning opportunities to build people manager capability and confidence to effectively respond to and resolve issues relating to negative behaviours							People and Culture	Learning opportunities provided to people managers
8. Build the capability and support people managers to create a psychologically safe working environment where everyone feels safe to speak up		8.1 Continue to enhance and deliver inclusive leadership education to all leaders					People and Culture	Sexual harassment training delivered to reinforce key inclusive leadership practices
		8.2 Design and deliver programs that contribute to the development and enhancement of effective and engaged workplace teams					People and Culture	Programs designed and delivered
Recruitment and promotion	9. Embed diversity and inclusion principles into our recruitment and promotion processes	9.1 Refresh CFA's recruitment and selection policy and supporting procedures to incorporate feedback provided from an external diversity and inclusion best practice review					People and Culture	Policy and procedure reviewed and updated to reflect best practice Positive end user experience of recruitment process
		9.2 Review learning and development opportunities to ensure access is equitable					People and Culture Operational Doctrine & Training	Participation rates for training and promotion reflect all levels and demographics across CFA
		9.3 Revise selection criteria for senior roles to include a standard requirement for candidates to demonstrate capability in building diverse and inclusive teams					People and Culture	Included in selection criteria
		9.3 Review and refresh promotion, recruitment and succession planning processes with a diversity and inclusion lens					People and Culture	Promotion, recruitment and succession planning outputs reflect application of diversity principles and practices
		9.4 Review and revise development opportunities aligned to development needs identified against the capability framework and career development pathways					People and Culture Organisational Development	Analysed development needs through PPRs Reviewed opportunities for upskilling
		9.5 Provide unconscious bias training for hiring people managers and for those on interview and shortlisting panels					People and Culture	Training completed
		9.6 Better understand the reasons for exits and trial tailored retention strategies to prevent preventable exits					People and Culture	Employee exit interview process in place Responses analysed and periodically reviewed. Data used to enhance retention of employees to inform retention strategies

GENDER EQUALITY INDICATOR	KEY ACTIONS FROM AUDIT ANALYSIS AND CONSULTATION PROCESS	PRIORITY INITIATIVE	YR. 1 ENDING 2022	YR. 2 ENDING 2023	YR. 3 ENDING 2024	YR. 4 ENDING 2025	OWNER	HOW WE WILL MEASURE PROGRESS
Flexible work and other leave provisions	10. Continue to support flexible working options in ways that meet business needs	10.1 Continue to develop flexible work arrangements which align to business needs					People and Culture	Establish a schedule to review flexible work policy and alignment with business requirements
	11. Embed gender equality principles into key people policies commencing with family violence leave and parental leave	11.1 Review and communicate the family violence leave policy and supporting processes					People and Culture	Policy reviewed and communicated through appropriate learning and communication channels
		11.2 Provide training and resources to HR and people managers on how to support and respond to an employee experiencing family violence					People and Culture	HR practitioners and people managers trained People managers and employees feel confident to support and/or access family violence leave
		11.3 Review and refresh parental leave and supporting processes to encourage all genders to access parental leave					People and Culture	Promotion of current parental leave policy utilising appropriate employee communication channels
Gender segregation	12. Work towards reducing gender segregation	12.1 Deliver Inclusive Leadership education to all leaders, with a focus on unconscious gender biases and gender stereotyping (see 2.2, 7.1 and 8.1)					People and Culture	Training delivered targeting core inclusion practices
		12.2 Implement a buddy system for women to support situations where there is only one woman in a team					People and Culture	Implemented and monitored
		12.3 Increase attraction, recruitment and retention in non-traditional roles from diverse talent pools					People and Culture	Established opportunities to participate in sponsored secondments for non-traditional roles
		12.4 Trial tailored attraction, recruitment and retention strategies to encourage promotion of gender and diverse people in non-traditional roles, for example women apprentices, men in clerical roles, to reduce the gendered segregation in some teams					People and Culture	An increase in applicants from targeted groups
		12.5 Ensure equitable access for all genders to facilities and amenities					Infrastructure Services	Annual audit of facilities and prisonisation of key upgrades and gender requirements



Attachment A: Strategic Resource Plan

CFA is committed to ensuring adequate resources are allocated to developing and implementing our Gender Equality Action Plan. We are guided by the gender equality principles and believe that advancing gender equality is a shared responsibility. Key in implementing the Plan will be that activity will be led by Organisational Leadership and actions undertaken across all Directorates. In addition, we have three staff members responsible for supporting the implementation of the CFA's Gender Equality Action Plan:

- Manager Diversity and Inclusion (1 FTE fulltime)
Role: Oversight of Gender Equality Action Plan and obligations under Gender Equality Act 2020 including gender impact assessments; to ensure implementation and outcomes are met.
- Diversity and Inclusion Consultant (2 FTE fulltime)
Role: Support the implementation of the Gender Equality Action Plan and obligations under Gender Equality Act 2020 including gender impact assessments.

Details of how the CFA Gender Equality Action Plan will be implemented can be found in the Detailed Gender Equality Action Plan (pp. 24-26).

Leadership Commitment: Project Control Group

To oversee activities aligned to our requirements under the Gender Equality Act, CFA has established a cross functional working group of key influencers - the Project Control Group (PCG).

The PCG is chaired by our CEO, with a membership consisting of key leaders and decision makers and a mix of genders and backgrounds. The PCG has been established to oversee and support the implementation of CFA's requirements under the Act and to provide input into strategies and actions to reduce barriers to workplace gender equality at CFA. As the implementation process progresses, additional working groups may be established to support the PCG and enhance the delivery of identified actions and outcomes.

The Gender Equality Action Plan, when read in conjunction with CFA's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, empowers CFA employees at all levels to take positive action towards gender equality. Building the capability of our leaders ensures they have the confidence, capability and authorising environment to make positive change across their teams and business units.

Attachment B: Measuring progress

CFA's commitment and progress towards gender equality will be clearly outlined in CFA's Annual Report. This is a visible commitment and ensures CFA remains accountable to its members and the Victorian community in its actions towards gender equality.

Actions identified within specific work groups or business units will be incorporated into business plans to ensure quarterly reporting on progress is maintained.

Quarterly reporting of progress will be provided to the Board and the Executive.

Measures have been outlined in our action plan.

A detailed progress report will be submitted to the Gender Equality Commissioner every two years.

Attachment C: Relevant legislation and supporting guidelines

The relevant laws, standards and guidelines considered in the development of CFA's Gender Equality Action Plan include:

- Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)
- Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- The Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)
- Safe and strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy (2016)



Contact

For more information about the GEAP or diversity and inclusion at CFA, please contact the CFA Diversity and Inclusion team: diversityandinclusion@cfa.vic.gov.au

