

The Queen Elizabeth Centre Gender Equality Action Plan



2022 – 2025





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A message from our CEO

QEC acknowledges all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Traditional Owners of the lands on which we walk, live and raise our children.

We pay our respects to Traditional Owners past, present and future.

We acknowledge the importance of children being raised with connections to culture, community and family

QEC's vision is: *All children have the best start in life*

QEC's role is: *Partnering with families and communities to deliver early parenting support that enables children to thrive*

QEC is proud to present our first Gender Equality Action Plan ('GEAP') - representing both a formal organisational commitment and a practical approach to fostering a gender equitable workplace.

QEC recognises that improved outcomes for children and their families can only be achieved through gender equity and a gender equal environment. We are committed to providing a safe environment free from discrimination, bias, and one that celebrates diverse attributes, skills, perspectives and experiences. We recognise that the lives of the people we work and interact with are influenced and shaped by intersecting experiences, identities and relationships.

Aligned to our values, strategy and priorities, this plan has been developed in consultation with our people and will be the guiding approach for our actions and priorities over the next four years.

We look forward to sharing our journey with you.

Sue White

Chief Executive Officer

July 2022

About QEC

QEC is proud to be Victoria's largest provider of early parenting services. We are passionate about supporting children to thrive, families to grow and parents to succeed.

Formed in 1917, QEC is a public hospital and community service organisation. We offer a variety of services to support families with young children, in partnership with families, communities, government and other services providers.

QEC actively promote the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all children. Many families experience a variety of strengths and challenges that impact on the ways they nurture and support their young children. We offer a community of support to families to enable all children to have the best start in life. Our programs are research-informed and guided by best practice. Tailored to meet the unique needs of each family, our work equips families to nurture, protect and enhance their children's, safety, health and development.

Our multidisciplinary team of experienced professionals are committed to partnering with families to achieve the best outcomes for children. Our team includes Maternal and Child Health, Paediatric, Mental Health and General Nurses, Midwives, a Medical Practitioner, Psychologists, Social Workers, and Early Parenting Practitioners.

With service locations based at Noble Park, Mentone, Wodonga, Preston, Dandenong, Carrum Downs, Morwell and Bairnsdale, QEC are committed to providing services that are accessible to families across Victoria.



About the QEC Gender Equality Action Plan

QEC's first Gender Equality Action Plan sets a framework and key initiatives that align with our values, strategy and priorities for driving and achieving sustainable gender equality outcomes. This action plan was developed in accordance with the objectives of the Gender Equality Act 2021 ('the Act') and focuses on the seven key workplace gender equality indicators.

Developing the Gender Equality Action Plan

Development of QEC's GEAP commenced in 2021, with a comprehensive audit of our organisation's workforce composition and demographics, engagement, employee supports, systems and culture. An analysis was then undertaken of the findings of the Gender Audit to assess our current progress against the key workplace gender equality indicators as outlined by the Act.

These include:

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 work segregation



QEC Gender Equality Audit Results 2021

1 Baseline Audit Results

QEC's first gender equality audit was conducted in November, 2021. The period of workforce data that was audited was from July, 2020 to June, 2021. A snapshot of the audit results for the reporting period are provided in the table below.

93 % QEC staff identify as female*	75 % QEC board members identify as female *
8.8% Median pay gap – that favours women *	0 Sexual harassment claims during the reporting period *
93% Of QEC new hires during reporting period* were female	73% Of new female hires were for part time positions*

* Reporting period 07.07.2020 – 30.06.2021

2 Key Insights

Statistics and key insights identified from QEC's Gender Equality Audit are summarised in this section against each of the seven key workplace gender equality indicators.

Indicator 1 Gender composition at all levels of the workforce

A high proportion of QEC employees identify as female (93%). This is represented at all levels of the organisation from support services, clinical, customer service, corporate and administrative roles, to manager and executive roles, and across all employment categories and age groups. The majority of QEC employees are on permanent part time work arrangements. Out of all full time employees, employees who identify as male more frequently tend to be employed in full time roles compared to females, who are mostly employed on part time arrangements. This is represented at all levels of the workforce.

Indicator 2 Gender composition of governing bodies

The QEC Board reflect the overall gender composition of the QEC workforce where majority of the Board members are female, with 75% female to 25% male.

Indicator 3 Gender pay equity

The overall median Gender Pay Gap as at June 2021, was 8.8% favouring women.

Indicator 4 Workplace sexual harassment

No formal sexual harassment complaints were receiving within the reporting period.

Indicator 5 Recruitment and promotion

Overall recruitment activities within the reporting period shows that majority of the hires were women (93%). Recruitment completed during the reporting period also reflected that a much higher proportion of female applicants were received for part-time position vacancies (73%).

Indicator 6 Leave and flexibility

All employees who accessed either long or short periods of parental leave during the reporting period were women.

Indicator 7 Gendered work segregation

Similar to the overall workforce composition, there is a high proportion of women in all areas of the workforce other than within the Information Communications and Technology ('ICT') department. A higher uptake for both formal and informal flexible working arrangements by women was identified, in comparison to men.



3 Data Gaps

There were reporting limitations on some workforce data such as intersectionality due to the current systems in use.

We aim to strengthen our data collection processes and methods to capture fields such as non-binary gender identities, employee disability status, cultural and linguistic diversity, religion and sexual orientation. We have also identified that this year's People Matter Survey demographic data includes this information (for those who responded to the survey) and therefore plan to use this data to assist as a starting point to consultation.

4 Meaningful Consultation

In developing the QEC GEAP, the consultation process we have undertaken reflects the requirements set out in the Victorian Gender Equality Act (2020).

As part of this process, our team consulted with, and sought input into, the development of the Gender Equality Action Plan from our employees, members of the leadership team, QEC Executive Management as well as relevant employee representatives. Consultation and the development of the plan was coordinated by the GEAP Working Group, sharing baseline audit analysis and discussion through multiple forums and encouraging feedback and ideas for the development of the Action Plan.

5 QEC Commitment

QEC recognises that improved outcomes for children and their families can only be achieved within a safe and equal environment, with equal access to resources and opportunities. Therefore, we are committed to ensuring that QEC is at all times an inclusive, supportive and safe workplace which both values and celebrates diversity.

QEC Gender Equality Action Plan is our commitment to progressing towards Gender Equality and QEC's dedication to a systematic and sustainable approach towards achieving diversity in all forms.

6 QEC Case for Change

QEC has considered the gender equality principles contained in the Gender Equality Act 2020 in the development of this Gender Equality Action Plan.

QEC is committed to upholding these principles, which have been used to inform the strategies and measures contained within this GEAP.

During development of our GEAP, we considered women's historical experiences of discrimination and disadvantage based on gender, and prepared strategies to promote equal opportunity for women and gender diverse employees.



7 Intersectionality

QEC has also considered intersectional gender inequality in the development of our GEAP. We are committed to taking action to address how gender inequality can interact with other inequities by:

- identifying areas for improved intersectional data collection
- analysing our workplace gender audit data to identify systemic barriers to access, inclusion and equity for people who experience intersectional gender inequality
- consulting with and incorporating feedback from employees who experience intersectional gender inequality in the development of the GEAP
- developing strategies and measures to specifically address how gender inequality affects diverse employees who face more than one type of inequality.

QEC embraces all opportunities to improve and promote diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace and the gender quality principles in the Act are applied to create informed strategies and measures including;

- Ensuring a safe and equal workplace where everyone is treated with dignity, respect, and fairness and has equal access to resources and opportunities
- Applying gender equality policies and practices across all levels of the workforce ensuring gender equality benefits all regardless of gender
- Recognising and promoting benefits of a diverse workforce including significant economic, social and health benefit and applying this to everyday practices
- QEC understand that gender equality is a precondition for the prevention of family and other forms of violence against women and that in order for us to improve outcomes for our families and children, we need to create a gender equal environment
- QEC recognises that gender inequality may be compounded by disadvantage or discrimination based on age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation, and other attributes. We are committed to building our capacity to identify and addressing these internationalities at play within both our workforce and the communities we work with.

QEC celebrates diversity every day – we are guided by intersectionality theories to ensure all families we work with and our stakeholders feel safe, supported and involved. We prioritise responding to disadvantaged families, with 33% of families coming to QEC have had some involvement with Child Protection ('CP'). We strive for opportunities to prevent further disadvantage, (through our partnerships with CP and MacKillop Family Services) to promote equitable access to health, wellbeing and care for families at the intersection of various systems or with complex vulnerabilities. Some of these initiative and partnerships include;

First Peoples communities

We respect the strength and diversity of First Nation peoples – past and present – and our employees and programs centre child safety, stability and development on their unique cultures and experiences.

On average, over 5% of our client families identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, however we support much greater numbers through our partnerships, shared-care arrangements, co-locations, and joint appointments with ACCOs, namely Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation, Dandenong District Aboriginal Co-op and Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service. In addition to these service delivery arrangements, we also engage ACCOs in designing, monitoring and evaluating our service planning. For example, partners informing our Noble Park and Frankston infrastructure projects include VACCA, VACCHO.

Of the 90 First Nations client families we supported over the past year, 89% met their care goals.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Communities

As a result of our community engagement and collaborative service planning with local organisations, 30% of the families we see are born overseas. To promote safety in all forms, including cultural, for their children, we partner with CALD families and communities in delivering initiatives that strengthen community, promote cross-cultural cohesion and relationships, and build our workforce capability.

Of the 319 families born overseas whom we supported over the past year, 86% met their care goals.

Families and Children with Differing Abilities

We acknowledge that each person is different and will experience their disabilities and the world differently. Our person and family-centred approaches promote autonomy and ensure clients have full agency over their care. We recently developed partnerships with Victorian disability organisations, including the Association for Children with a Disability to further this.

Data gaps in the workforce

Our workplace gender audit analysis has identified the need to a more systematic approach to recording intersectional data and we are reviewing our systems and processes in place to introduce an effective approach to data collection.

QEC Gender Equality Action Plan 2021 -2025

Workplace Gender Equality Act Indicator	Key findings from QEC Gender Audit 2021	Strategy	Actions	Measures	Responsible	When
Indicator 1. Gender Composition of all levels of the workforce	At QEC, a high proportionate of staff are women. Majority of women employed are in part time roles, whereas most men employed at QEC are employed in fulltime roles. This is represented at all levels of the workforce.	1.1 Implement gender equality policies and practices across all levels of the workforce	Establish specific targets for gender composition at all levels of the workforce	Aim for a minimum of 50% female participation at all levels of the workforce (Board, Exec, Leadership teams, clinical teams). Flexible work arrangements and part time work available to employees of both genders.	Board, Executive Team, Leadership team in collaboration with GEAP working group and People and Culture Team	2022/2023
			Use of gender neutral, unbiased & inclusive language in all QEC policies & procedures	Review and update QEC policies and procedures	People and Culture Team and Controlled Documents Committee (CDC)	2022/2023
			All QEC Communications practices to be gender neutral, inclusive and diverse while promoting gender equality	Ensure all QEC Communication practices reflect appropriate language, consistent with Communication strategy	People and Culture and Communications Teams	2022/2023

			Gender Inclusion Awareness initiatives	Undertake annual review of GEAP/pulse check to gauge effectiveness of Gender Inclusion Awareness initiatives	People and Culture Team and GEAP Working group	Annually
Indicator 2. Gender composition of governing bodies	The QEC Board reflect the overall gender composition of the QEC workforce where majority of the Board are women	2.1 Leadership commitment to gender and intersectionality equality	Ensure female participation on Board, Executive and leadership teams.	Aim for a minimum of 50% female participation at all levels of the workforce (Board, Exec, Leadership teams, clinical teams). Flexible work arrangements and part time work available to employees of both genders.	Board, Executive Team, Leadership team in collaboration with GEAP working group and People and Culture Team	2022/2023
			Offer mentoring and leadership development programs for current and aspiring female leaders (e.g. LEAP/LIFT/ External Leadership programs for Women)	Participant completion of training programs, positive participant feedback. No. acting and project secondments per year. Employee retention (turnover rate).	People and Culture Team	2022/2023
Indicator 3. Equal remuneration	QEC remuneration reflects pay and equity across	3.1 Remove gender pay gap	Increase pay transparency in recruitment, promotions and appraisals by referring to relevant Enterprise Agreements	Collection of the correct data and data analysis	People and Culture Team	2022/2023

	genders - refer data analysis		Embed gender equality in recruitment, remuneration and promotion processes	Review of recruitment strategies and female representation in advertising campaigns	People and Culture Team	2023/2024
			Ongoing monitoring and analysis of gender pay gap	Collection of the correct data and data analysis	People and Culture Team	Annually
Indicator 4. Sexual harassment in the workplace	QEC has no reported sexual harassment complaints in the reporting period	4.1 Maintain a workplace free from sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination	Ensure a clear process exists for an employee or by-stander to report unwanted or offensive behaviour in the workplace, and at work-related social activities, confidentially and without fear of reprisals, with appropriate action - Ongoing training - Create awareness on QEC policies and procedures + broader legal obligations as an employee Further clarity on People Matter survey questions around sexual harassment	Promote policies and procedures in simple messaging as part of QEC's positive team culture and values promotion	Executive Team, Leadership, People and Culture	2023/2024

		4.2 Develop and launch a campaign on violence against women and intersectionality	Develop and implement a program of activities and events to engage and support informal learning and build awareness of gender equality and intersectional factors, including International Women's Day and LGBTIQA+ festivals and events, and significant cultural events including National Reconciliation week and NAIDOC week	People Matter Survey outcomes, number of events hosted per year	People and Culture and Communications team	Annually
Indicator 5. Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace	Recruitment completed in the audit period reflected that female applicants were overrepresented in part-time roles. This was reflective of all levels of the	5.1 Inclusive recruitment processes	Ensure all roles advertised are inclusive in the language, imagery and platforms used	Updating the relevant data collection points	People and Culture	2022/2023
			Monitor shortlisting, interviewing, higher duties, promotion date to ensure appropriate representation	Promote workplace equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives	People and Culture and Communications team and D&I Committee once formed	

	workforce		Implement workforce data collection to including; gender ID, primary and secondary carer leave, promotions and secondments, part-time vs fulltime employment	Workforce data analysis	People and Culture	2022/2023
			New employee on boarding data collection to include; 3 x gender options, gender pronouns, cultural and religious diversity	Workforce data analysis	People and Culture	
			P&C & Leadership teams to complete unconscious bias training	No. participants completed training	People and Culture	2023/2024
Indicator 6. Leave and Flexibility	All staff who accessed parental leave during the reporting period were women	6.1 Provide support for parental leave, family violence leave, careers leave	Identify roles that could be on a job sharing arrangement	Explore job-sharing options	Executive Team, Leadership, People and Culture	2023/2024
			Job sharing as an option to promote flexibility	Promote Family Friendly options as part of recruitment and retention campaign and QEC employee benefits	Executive Team, Leadership, People and Culture	
		6.2 Increase promotion and	Promotion of work life balance	People Matter survey feedback re flexibility and work life balance	People and Culture	2022/2023

		provision of flexible work arrangements	Explore ways to better engage with employees on parental leave	Retention of employees, returning to QEC from parental leave	People and Culture	2023/2024
Indicator 7. Gendered segregation within the workplace	There is a high proportion of women all areas of the QEC workforce except within the ICT team	7.1 Increase gender and intersectionality awareness and support	Implement actions under Indicator 1 - 5 to ensure QEC address all gender representation gaps within the workforce	No. actions completed	Executive Team, Leadership, People and Culture	Annually
		7.2 Develop and provide professional development on gender, intersectionality and inclusion	Incorporate an understanding of gender equality and intersectional factors into an induction program and provide regular and ongoing training across the areas including understanding gender identity and sexual orientation, equity and inclusion, unconscious bias, and Preventing Violence Against Women (PVAW)	Hours of training delivered each year	Executive Team, Leadership, People and Culture	2022/2023

Data Gaps	Strengthen collection of data about non-binary gender identities, employee disability status, cultural diversity, religion and sexual orientation.	New employee on boarding data collection to include; 3 x gender options, disability status, cultural and religious diversity	Implement data collection methods to including; gender ID, primary and secondary career leave, promotions and secondments, part time vs full time employment	Implementation of appropriate data collection methods, conducting analysis of data to determine focus of workforce support and inclusion initiatives	Executive Team, Leadership, People and Culture	2022/2023
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Implementation and Progress

Implementing and Resourcing

The development and monitoring of progress against the GEAP is centrally coordinated by the People and Culture team. The GEAP Working Group will continue to engage and provide ongoing implementation support. Several actions identified in the GEAP include participation of employees from across the organisation, supporting activities to raise awareness, knowledge, and skill development. We aim to promote collective ownership of the GEAP across the organisation by growing our GEAP Working Group with those who are interested in taking up any cross functional projects based on diverse skills, interests and roles. The Finance team will play a key role in conducting financial analysis and budgeting for the various initiatives and the OHSES Committee and the leadership team at QEC will collaborate with People and Culture and the GEAP Working group to oversee implementation of GEAP action items.

Strategic Resourcing

The Queen Elizabeth Centre's ('QEC') Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-2025 (GEAP) aims to promote gender equality within our workforce and improve outcomes for people of all genders.

Under the Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic), QEC is required to ensure adequate resources are invested to implement its GEAP. Properly resourcing the implementation of the GEAP is critical to delivering on our commitments to employees and meeting our obligation under the Act to make reasonable and material progress towards workplace gender equality.

Measuring Progress

The actions and outcomes of this plan will be monitored through the measures and timelines as detailed in the Action plan. Regular reviews of process measures are in place to monitor ongoing progress and this will be overseen by the Executive Management team on a regular basis.

- Annual progress updates against implementation measures shared organisation wide
- Creating a dedicate GEAP section on the intranet for communicating progress and creating visibility
- Repotting to the Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner every 2 years

We aim to use the subsequent audit process to gain a full set of data, particularly around intersectionality for a more effective action plan that is focused on future improvement strategies.



Key Terms and Definitions

Gender

Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other.

As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time (2) Gender interact with but is different from sex, which refers to the different biological and physiological characteristics of females, males and intersex persons, such as chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs. Gender and sex are related to but different from gender identity. Gender identity refers to a person's deeply felt, internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person's physiology or designated sex at birth.

Gender Equality

Gender Equality is the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men, trans and gender-diverse people. Equality does not mean that women, men, trans and gender diverse people will become the same but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on their gender.

Gender Equity

Gender Equity is the provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities on the basis of gender. The concept recognises that people may have different needs and power related to their gender and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies gender related imbalances.

Sex

Sex refers to a person's biological characteristics. A person's sex is usually described as being male or female. Some people may not be exclusively male or female, which is referred to as intersex. Some people identify as neither male nor female.

Intersectionality

'Intersectionality' (also known as intersectional disadvantage or discrimination) refers to the ways in which different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to

overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation.⁴ Gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience due to other characteristics, such as:

- Race
- Aboriginality
- Religion
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Age
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity

Intersectionality recognises that the causes of disadvantage or discrimination do not exist independently, but intersect and overlap with gender inequality, magnifying the severity and frequency of the impacts while also raising barriers to support.

References:

- 2 Gender and health (World Health Organisation)
- 3 Gender equality: what is it and why do we need it? (Victorian Government, 2021)
- 4 Understanding intersectionality (Victorian Government, 2021)
- 5 Applying intersectionality (Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, 2022)

