

# Gender Equity Strategy

November 2014

# Table of Contents

- Introduction ..... 3
- Key Terms and Definitions..... 4
- Gender equity: An Overview ..... 5
- Gender equity strategy ..... 6
- Implementation ..... 7

## Introduction

The Gender Equity Strategy articulates Council's priorities for advancing gender equity across the organisation and achieving the vision for a community that is inclusive, respectful, fair and safe for people of all genders. The City of Whittlesea recognises that addressing gender inequity is crucial to achieve better health and social wellbeing; improved organisational performance; and the prevention of violence against women.

### The case for gender equity

'(A)n organization's performance is determined by the human capital that it possesses and its ability to use this resource efficiently. Ensuring the healthy development and appropriate use of half of the world's available talent pool thus has a vast bearing on how competitive a country may become or how efficient a company may be. There is clearly also a values-based case for gender equality: women are one half of the world's population and deserve equal access to health, education, economic participation and earning potential and political decision-making power<sup>1</sup>

The City of Whittlesea recognises that men and women have different access to resources, power responsibilities and life experiences. Therefore different strategies are often necessary to address this disadvantage and achieve equal outcomes for women and men, boys and girls.

### Local government's role in gender equity

As the largest employer in the municipality, a service provider and an advocate for the community, Council has a responsibility and is well placed to address gender equity and to build an inclusive and fair community for women and men. Local governments play a pivotal role in creating safe and healthy environments for the communities they serve. Local governments provide a range of community services, safe public spaces and community facilities which can be used as platforms to influence change.<sup>2</sup>

Local governments can lead change across policy, planning, programming, service delivery, partnerships, political influence and advocacy, social marketing and integrating gender equity throughout all Council business and as a whole of community responsibility<sup>3</sup>. The *'Gender Equity in Local Government Fact Sheets'* point to the simple ways Gender equity can be integrated in Council's core business through gender analysis; approaches to infrastructure; land use planning and design; promoting women in leadership; workplaces; sports and recreation; and access to services.

### Council Plan

The City of Whittlesea's commitment to embed gender equity in Council policy and practice is articulated in the City of Whittlesea Council Plan 2013-17. *Future Direction 5: Health and Wellbeing 2. 'Council will support action to prevent violence against women and children by addressing the underlying causes of family violence and promoting equal and respectful relationships in the community.'*<sup>4</sup>

## Key Terms and Definitions

### Gender

Refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

\*While this document refers to men and women (boys and girls) the City of Whittlesea recognises that gender is not binary and exists on a continuum. Gender changes over time and between cultures, is fluid, constructed and not the biologically determined attributes of sex.

### Sex

Refers to biological and physiological differences between women and men. Intersex refers to those whose biological sex cannot be classified as clearly male or female

### Equity

Is a term which describes fairness and justice in outcomes. It is not about the equal delivery of services, or distribution of resources, it is about recognising diversity and disadvantage, and directing resources and services towards those most in need, to ensure equal outcomes for all.

### Gender Equity

Is the process of being fair to men and women. Gender Equity acknowledges that men and women have different access to resources, power responsibilities and life experiences and different strategies are often necessary to address disadvantages and achieve equal outcomes for women and men, boys and girls.

### Gender Equality

Is the outcome reached through gender equity. It is the equal valuing by the society of the similarities and differences between women and men, and the varying roles that they play.

### Gender Blind

Is the assumption (a myth) that females and males will automatically benefit and participate equally in social, economic and political activities and organisations.

### Gender analysis / lens

Is a method of assessing the difference in the lives of women and men and the impacts that policies, decisions and services have on particular groups of men and women.

### Diversity

Men and women are not homogenous groups. Age, ability, ethnicity, culture and religious background, literacy, socio economic status, sexuality, family structure can all impact peoples' access to services, resources, power and influences opportunities, responsibilities and life experience.

## Gender equity: An Overview

Federal and State legislation links		
• Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)	• Sex Discrimination Act 1984	
• Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008	• Local Government Act 1989	• Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010
City of Whittlesea strategic links		
• City of Whittlesea Community Plan 2013 - 2017	• City of Whittlesea Council Plan 2013 - 2017	• Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013 -2017
• Multicultural Action Plan 2014 - 2018	• One Whittlesea	• Family Violence Strategy 2014 - 2018
• Disability Action Plan 2013 - 2016	• Connect: Children, young people and families 2013 - 2018	• Reconciliation Action Plan 2012 - 2015
Key policy areas - Rationale		
Health and social wellbeing <sup>5</sup>	Improved organisational performance <sup>6</sup>	Preventing violence against women <sup>7</sup>
<p>Gender equity addresses the unequal status of diverse groups of men and women, boys and girls and aims to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce disadvantage</li> <li>• Improve physical, mental and social health and wellbeing</li> <li>• Improve access to safe, respectful and inclusive public facilities, programs and services</li> <li>• Reduce health inequalities across diverse communities</li> <li>• Reduce barriers to economic participation and access to financial resources</li> </ul>	<p>In the workplace, gender equity seeks to address barriers to equal workforce participation and eliminate bias based on gender. Higher levels of gender equity at work is proven to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve organisational performance</li> <li>• Attract the top talent from the whole talent pool</li> <li>• Reduce expenses through increased retention</li> <li>• Manage risk and anticipate community need more effectively.</li> </ul> <p>Diverse teams, ensures diverse ideas.</p>	<p>Gender equity is key to ending violence against women. The strongest predictor of high levels of violence against women is unequal power between men and women.</p> <p>International evidence<sup>8</sup> shows where there are high levels of gender equity;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valuing women’s participation and representation and</li> <li>• Few economic, social or political differences in power between men and women;</li> </ul> <p>there are significantly lower levels of intimate partner and sexual violence.</p>
<p><b>Desired Outcome</b> The City of Whittlesea is inclusive, respectful, fair and safe for people of all genders</p>		

## Gender equity strategy

Desired outcome: The City of Whittlesea is inclusive, respectful, fair and safe for people of all genders	
Objective	Strategies
<p>1. The City of Whittlesea is an employer of choice with a respectful organisational culture that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>values gender diversity,</li> <li>strives for gender balance and</li> <li>embeds gender equity in all workplace policies, practice and procedures</li> </ul>	a. Apply gender lens and embed gender equity within human resource management and organisational culture projects
	b. Define, promote and equitably apply flexible/family friendly workplace strategies
	c. Address gender equity within leadership groups and in strategic decision making processes
	d. Achieve and maintain pay & entitlement equity
	e. Review and ensure equity of opportunities for professional development and further study
	f. Ensure our workplace is safe, inclusive and culture promotes gender equity
Objective	Strategies
<p>2. The City of Whittlesea's services, programs and policies, are inclusive and gender equitable.</p>	a. Policies and strategic documents will conduct and respond to Gender Equity Analysis
	b. Increase use, collection and reporting of sex disaggregated data in services, programs and policy
	c. Address gender equity of community consultations across the organisation
	d. Apply gender lens to the allocation of the City of Whittlesea's resources (including community funding, facilities use)
	e. Utilise Gender analysis to decrease gendered barriers to participation and increase inclusiveness of City of Whittlesea's services, groups and programs
Objective	Strategies
<p>3. The City of Whittlesea's places and spaces facilitate community connection and are safe, welcoming, respectful and inclusive of all genders</p>	a. Incorporate gender equity principles in design & function of public spaces, community facilities, park and recreation
	b. Increase use of gender analysis and sex disaggregated data in planning and advising on the public realm, land use, facilities planning and parks and open space.
	c. Facilitate increased gender equitable inclusiveness of community settings

Objective	Strategies
<p>4. The City of Whittlesea is facilitating equitable opportunities for civic and economic participation and advancing gender equity in our community</p>	<p>a. Utilise media and communication opportunities to promote non-stereotype gender roles and raise awareness of gender equity</p>
	<p>b. Provide leadership and advocacy for improved gender equity within local government sector, local community, state and federal government settings</p>
	<p>c. Support and facilitate increased representation of women in community and civic leadership positions</p>
	<p>d. Facilitate improved opportunities for women’s local economic participation and financial security</p>

## Implementation

Established in November 2013 and chaired by the CEO, the City of Whittlesea Gender Equity Working Group (GEWG) meets bi-monthly and provides leadership and support to embed gender equity principles and practice in the core business of Council. The Gender Equity Working Group has scoped and developed the Gender Equity Strategy through research, benchmarking and consultation with members, internal teams and external experts.

This Gender Equity Strategy provides the framework for the Gender Equity Action Plan that the working group will drive across departments, in order to achieve the vision for a gender equitable organisation, community services, facilities and settings. This strategy and working group is supported by the secretariat support of Community Services. Annual reports are provided to Council and regular progress updates are provided to the Executive Leadership Team and Council as appropriate.

<sup>1</sup> World Economic Forum Gender Equity <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/part-1/the-case-for-gender-equality/> accessed November 2014

<sup>2</sup> *Gender Equity in Local Government Fact Sheets* Gender Equity in Local Government Working Group 2012

<sup>3</sup> Gender Equitable, Safe and Inclusive Communities Partnership between Brimbank City Council, Maribyrnong City Council, Wyndham City 2012-2014

<sup>4</sup> City Of Whittlesea Council Plan 2013-17

<sup>5</sup> Closing the gap in a generation: Final Report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health. WHO 2008

<sup>6</sup> Workplace Gender Equity Agency, The business case for gender equality ,March 2013 Accessed Nov 2014 <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2013-0429%20BRANDED%20FINAL%20businesscase%20for%20web.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Preventing violence before it occurs: A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria Vic Health 2007 VicHealth 2007, WHO 2002, World Report on Violence and Health, World Health Organization, Geneva. WHIN, 2011, Building a Respectful Community: A Strategy for the Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne 2011-2016