



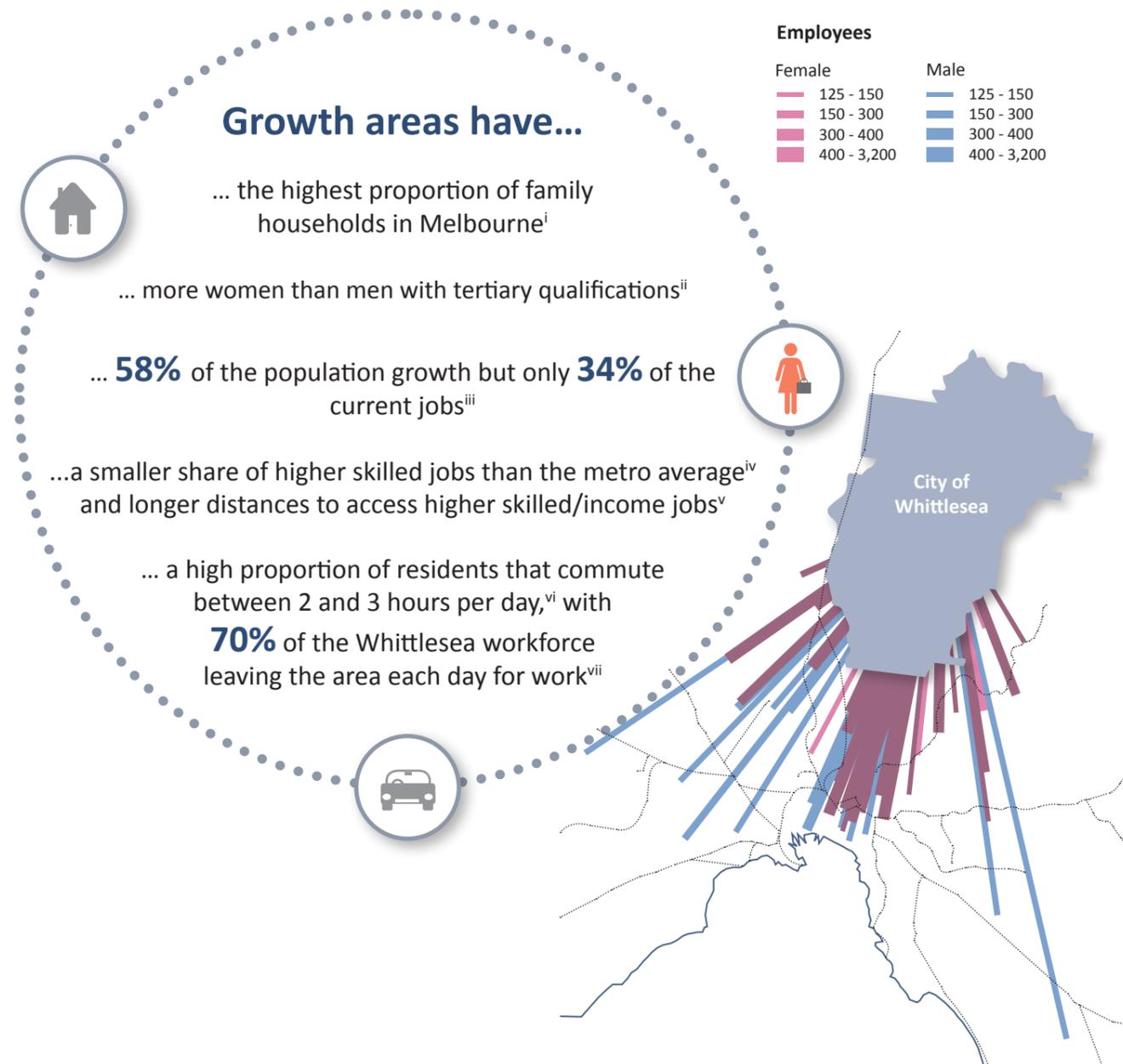
*This project is supported by the Victorian Government*

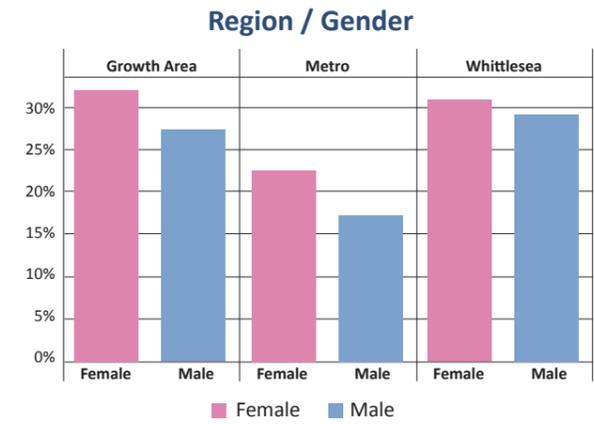
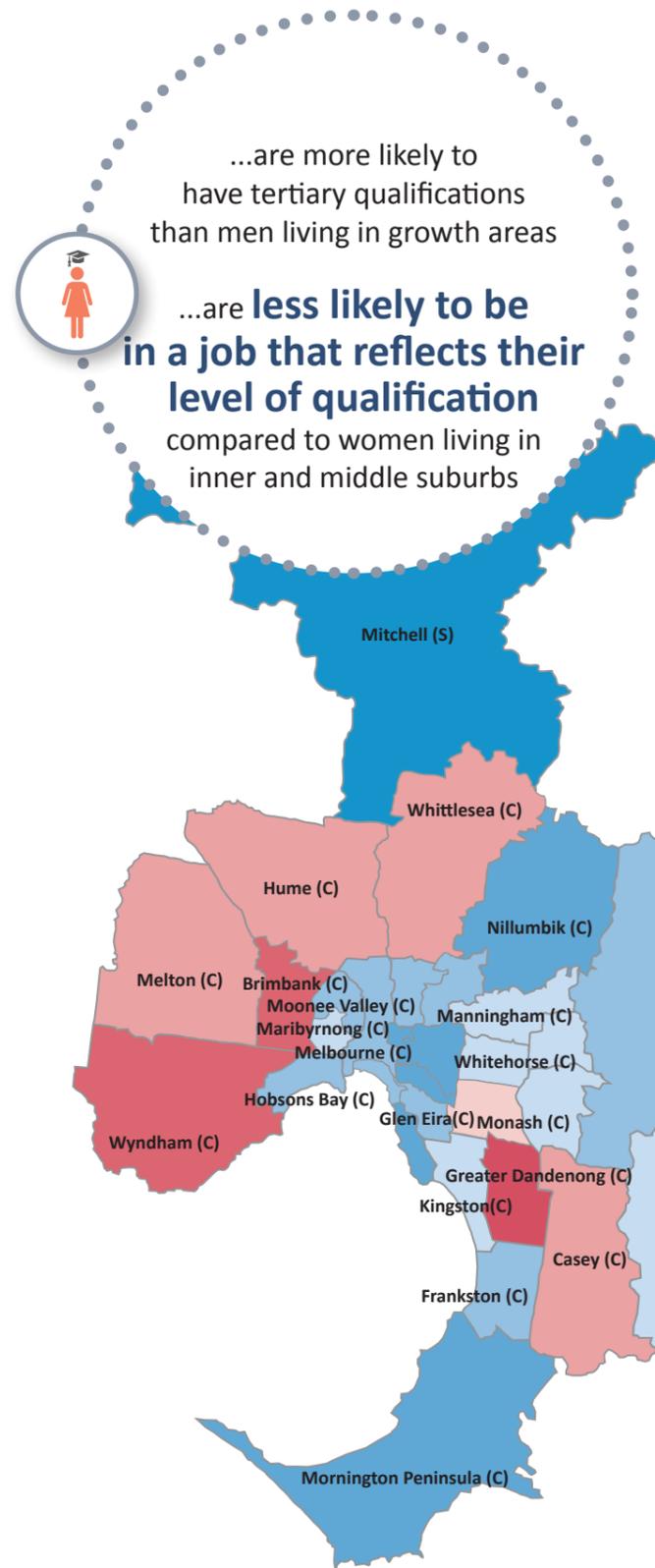
# Gender Equity in Employment

*in Melbourne's outer growth suburbs*

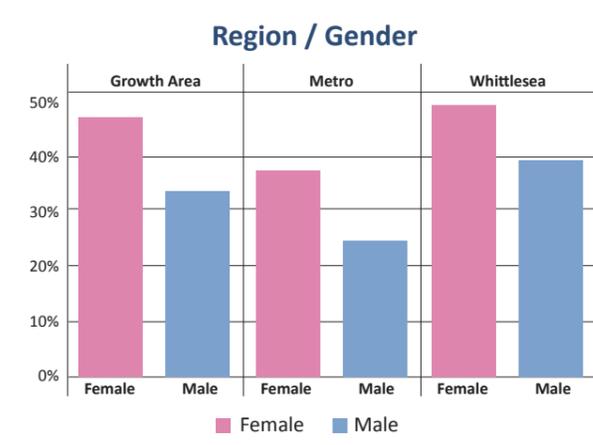
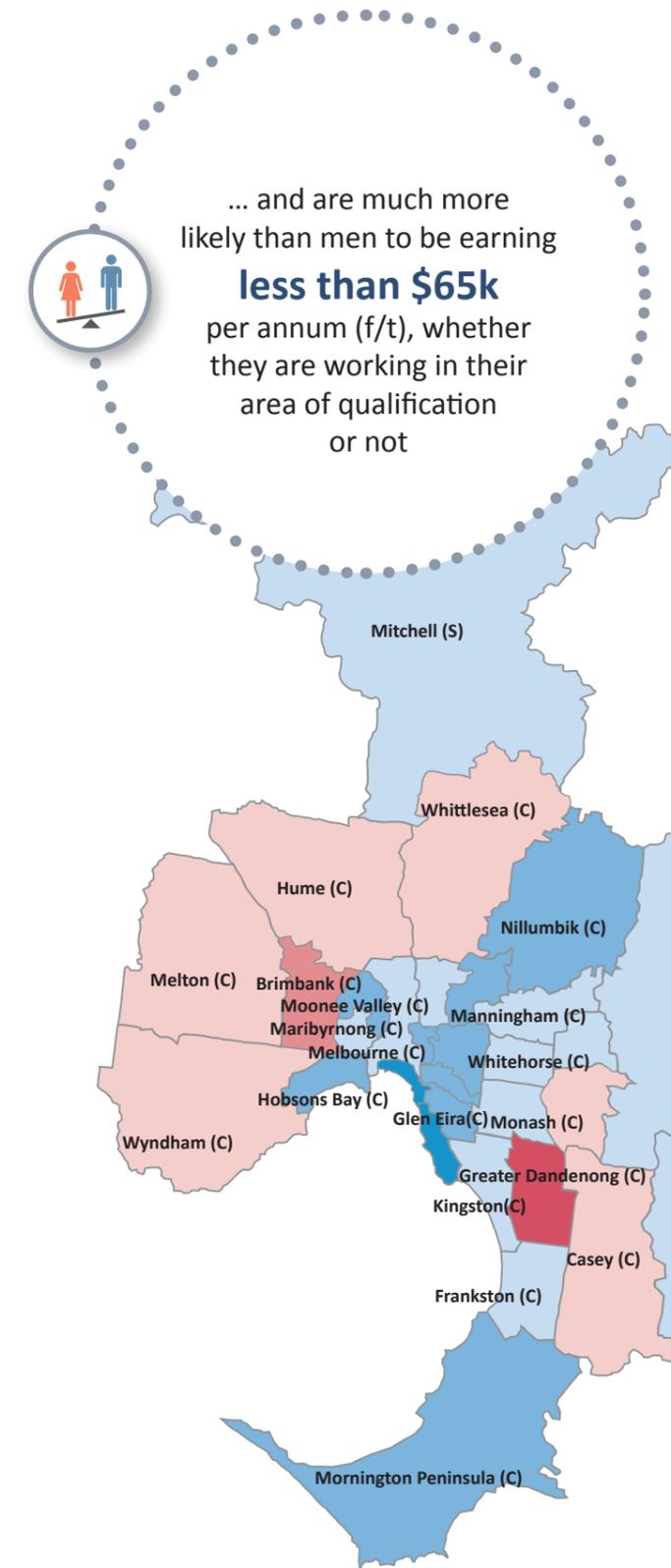
Families move to growth areas for affordable housing and the security of owning their own home. These residential areas are however, a long way from jobs.

Once they have moved in, families can find themselves making trade-offs between work and family life that reinforce unequal gender roles.





Proportion of female residents with a bachelor degree or higher who are not working in Managerial/Professional/Technician/Trade worker roles (Census 2016)

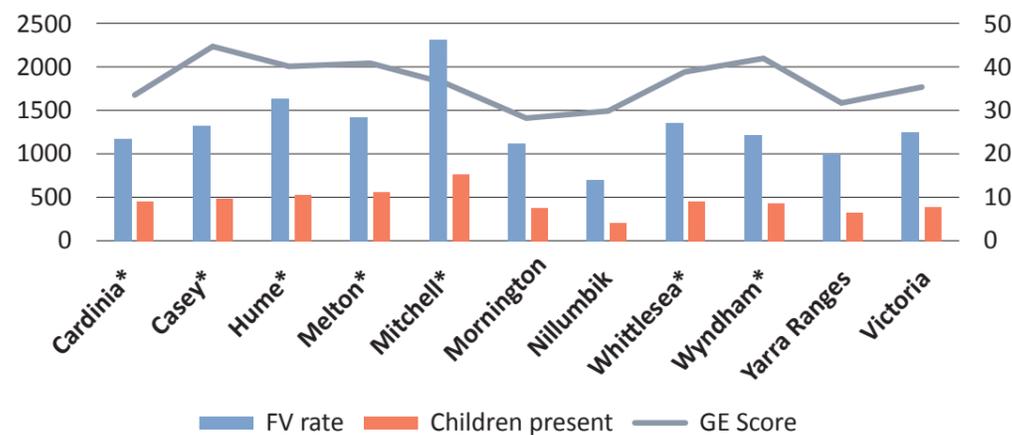


Proportion of female residents with a bachelor degree or higher earning less than \$65k per year (f/t only) (Census 2016)

### Violence against women

Limits to women’s independence socially and economically increases the probability of violence against women. Social structures and environments that challenge these limitations and enhance women’s economic independence and security are protective against violence against women and support the social conditions necessary for gender equality (Our Watch, 2015). Growth areas have higher rates of family violence including incidents where children are present (Crime Statistics Agency Victoria, 2019) and often have low support for gender equality (VicHealth, 2015) – refer graph.

**Family violence incident rate per 100,000 population and percentage population with low gender equality score (growth\* and interface LGAs)**



### Stress and time pressure

The Australian Work Life Index shows working women experience greater time pressure than men, feeling chronically rushed and pressured for time, regardless of working hours (Skinner & Pocock, 2014). There is a demonstrated link between long commutes and poor health outcomes (VicHealth, 2016), growth areas perform worse than the Victorian average on Work, Life and Time (VicHealth, 2011):

- Wyndham residents are significantly more likely to commute >2 hours per day (26.2% - the least favourable in the State)
- Whittlesea residents are significantly less likely to have time for family and friends (36.2% - least favourable in the State); Casey not far behind on 33.2%
- Hume residents are significantly less likely to have adequate sleep (<7 hours per weekday) (44.1% - least favourable in the State)

#### Case study 1 – Over skilled for local employment

Amelia lives in Doreen with her husband and 9-year-old son. Before having her son, Amelia realised that although she loved her high-powered corporate career in the city, working full time and commuting at least two and a half hours each day would become too difficult.

Amelia loves to work and didn’t want to lose that part of her identity. She decided to start her own business because she could only find roles close to home that were lower-skilled, lower-paid or full-time. She is happy with her decision but running a home-business has brought new challenges. Because Amelia works from home, she feels pressure to be primarily responsible for the day-to-day running of the household, including housework, cooking, childcare, appointments, school pick-ups/drop-offs and the emotional load of the family. Amelia’s husband was raised in a traditional household and when she asks him to help with care or domestic work, he questions her need to have a career. She feels he doesn’t take her business seriously.

Amelia hires co-working spaces in the inner city to meet with clients because they have a professional feel and facilities such as meeting rooms, wi-fi and data projectors. However, travelling to the inner city can be frustrating. Congestion on Plenty Road and a lack of parking at her son’s school means she is only available to meet clients between 10am and 2pm.

*Because Amelia works from home, she feels pressure to be primarily responsible for the day-to-day running of the household, including housework, cooking, childcare, appointments, school pick-ups/drop-offs and the emotional load of the family.*

#### Case study 2 – Gender roles that perpetuate gender stereotypes

When Nicole was pregnant, her husband Mark wanted to be a stay-at-home dad and because she was career-orientated, she was happy with that arrangement. However, because Nicole was breastfeeding and Mark’s workplace was not supportive of a father taking primary carer leave, Nicole stayed at home when their son was born. Mark only had one week of ‘Dad’s Leave’ plus another week of annual leave, which they both felt was inadequate. When Mark returned to work, his request for flexible work arrangements to share some of the parenting load were denied.

Nicole’s anxiety increased significantly when her husband returned to work and she felt overwhelmed and isolated. Nicole felt that because she was home it made sense for her to do more of the household duties but could see how these arrangements reinforced gender stereotypes. Nicole missed being at work, interacting with different people and contributing her skills and talents to a workplace. She was exhausted and felt a loss of identity being at home with a dependent child. Mark wished he could have spent more time bonding with their son before returning to work, supporting Nicole and learning how to care for their child.

Nicole has returned to part-time work and remains the primary carer. Working close to home was a priority but due to a lack of higher-skilled and part-time roles, she is working below her qualifications and earning potential. Nicole and Mark don’t have family supports locally and so they rely on paid childcare while Nicole is at work. Nicole would love to increase from three to four days of work, but this would reduce her Child Care Benefits and her wage would be taken up by childcare costs. Nicole feels frustrated that there are so many barriers to women and men having equal opportunity to work and raise their children.

### Case study 3 – 20 minute city?

Sophia lives in the Whittlesea Township and is a single mother to three sons. Sophia was attracted to Whittlesea Township because she could afford to rent a family home on a sole parent income. However, living on the urban fringe can be challenging due to its distance to centres of work, services, community facilities, schools and the lack of public transport options.

Although Sophia has a bachelor degree and a postgraduate diploma, she is working in a part-time administration role at a school. She would love to work in a field relevant to her qualifications but is unable to commute into the inner city because it is too far, and the roles tend to be full-time. She hopes that one day she will get a foot in the door with a job in communications and dreams of working in the not-for-profit sector.

Sophia needs part-time work that is close to home so she can take her sons to and from school because there is no public transport. They can sometimes catch a private school bus, but Sophia can't afford this every day. Sophia must also take her son, Sam, who has a disability, to doctors and specialists during the week and these are often located in areas outside the municipality.

Sophia has observed that new housing developments in Mernda and Doreen have significantly increased road congestion and it now takes even longer to get anywhere. Sophia's work is on Plenty Road in Bundoora, which is significantly congested. She battles traffic to pick up her sons from school, take them to afterschool activities and then home. When Sophia gets home, she cooks dinner, helps with homework, completes some 'life admin' and the day-to-day household chores. She feels like she is always pressed for time and never has time for herself, such as going for a walk or seeing friends. She feels like her mental health and wellbeing is suffering.

### Case study 4 – Traffic congestion and transport issues

Maryam moved to South Morang with her husband and two children one year ago. Maryam drove three hours each day to and from her full-time job in Richmond. Although she loved her work, once she finished work for the day she switched back into 'mum mode' and felt anxious to pick up her children and get home. As her children were in childcare, the by-the-minute charges if she arrived after 6.30pm caused additional emotional and financial stress.

Maryam felt chronically pressed for time and she was sometimes irritable with her children, which she felt guilty about. Feeling this anxiety every day was a major trigger for Maryam to look for more family friendly career opportunities closer to home. Maryam eventually found a job in Bundoora but soon realised that while close in distance, congestion on Plenty Road meant she was still driving 30 to 40 minutes each way. Maryam was disappointed that she sacrificed her career and good wage in order to work close to home and be more available to her children, but that congestion meant she was still travelling at least 90 minutes daily.

Although Maryam enjoyed having more time with her family, she felt frustrated in her job because it was below her skill level and experience and she wanted more of a challenge. Maryam hopes that one day there will be more diverse job opportunities close to home, faster and more regular trains and less congested roads.

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*Maryam drove three hours each day to and from her full-time job in Richmond.*

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### Case study 5 – Workplace practices

Manjit migrated to Australia from Sri Lanka with her husband and daughter five years ago and they settled in Mernda. Manjit has a master's degree that is recognised in Australia, eight years' professional experience in Sri Lanka and speaks English fluently. Manjit has applied for many jobs but hasn't been invited for an interview and it has hurt her confidence.

Manjit's husband is a store manager in South Morang and is often required to work up to 12 hours a day. The unpredictable nature of his work hours means he cannot reliably look after their daughter or contribute to household duties. Manjit is looking for a job but is having difficulty finding one that suits her needs as she wants part-time work, to be close to home, and the flexibility to pick up and drop off her daughter from school.

One of Manjit's friends, Tracey, works in local government and has the working conditions Manjit is looking for.

Tracey explained that her job was advertised as full-time, but she applied anyway. At her interview, she told them she couldn't work full-time and was surprised to still be the successful candidate. The job advertisement did not mention the option of negotiable hours or flexibility.

Tracey sometimes feels frustrated because she is working at a lower level than her previous job, but the senior roles just don't have the flexibility she needs. Tracey is disappointed she won't be able to progress in her career until her children are older. Manjit understands this will probably be her situation too – provided she is given a chance.

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*Manjit has applied for many jobs but hasn't been invited for an interview and it has hurt her confidence.*

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## References

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<sup>i</sup> National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA) (2016) Population profiles <https://profile.id.com.au/ngaa/>

<sup>ii</sup> Census 2016

<sup>iii</sup> Brain, P., Stanley, J. and Stanley, J. 2019, Melbourne: How big, how fast and at what cost?, MSSI Research Paper, Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute, The University of Melbourne

<sup>iv</sup> Kelly, J-F., Donegan, P. (2015). *City Limits: Why Australia's cities are broken and how we can fix them*. Melbourne: University of Melbourne Publishing

<sup>v</sup> .id Consulting. (2018). *State of Australia's Fast Growing Outer Suburbs: The economic and demographic transition of the Fast Growing Outer Suburbs*. .id Consulting prepared for the NGAA. Retrieved from [https://ngaa.org.au/application/third\\_party/ckfinder/userfiles/files/180213%20NGAA%20State%20of%20the%20Fast%20Growing%20Outer%20Suburbs%20Final%20Report.pdf](https://ngaa.org.au/application/third_party/ckfinder/userfiles/files/180213%20NGAA%20State%20of%20the%20Fast%20Growing%20Outer%20Suburbs%20Final%20Report.pdf)

<sup>vi</sup> Census 2016

<sup>vii</sup> SGS Economics and Planning (2017), Whittlesea 2040 Background Paper

<sup>viii</sup> id Community: City of Whittlesea Sexes - Employment status <https://profile.id.com.au/whittlesea/sexes-byemployment-status?Sex=1&Denominator=1>

This paper has been prepared by the City of Whittlesea under the guidance of Jeanette Pope, Freelance Strategy, Policy, Research.

It uses data from the City of Whittlesea's unpublished 2019 report *Gender Equity in Employment* (SGS Economics and Planning), and interviews undertaken by staff with residents.

This project was inspired by the University of South Australia Centre for Work + Life's book *Time Bomb: work, rest and play in Australia Today* (2012) (Barbara Pocock, Natalie Skinner and Philippa Williams). *Time Bomb* articulated for us the inequitable experiences of work and care and the disproportionate negative impacts on women living in growth areas.



**City of  
Whittlesea**

### **Council contacts**

**Phone:** 9217 2170

**Email:** [info@whittlesea.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@whittlesea.vic.gov.au)

**Address:** 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang

**Hours:** 8.30am–5pm weekdays

**National Relay Service:** 133 677 (ask for 9217 2170)

**Mail:** Locked Bag 1, Bundoora MDC, Victoria 3083