

Bairnsdale Regional
Health Service

**Gender Equality
Action Plan**



Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Bairnsdale Regional Health Service (BRHS) acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and pays respect to and recognises the contribution from their Ancestors and Elders past and present.

Bairnsdale Regional Health Service acknowledges the Gunaikurnai people as the traditional owners of the land on which the health service is located.

We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the lands.

We pay our respects to elders both past and present and thank them for their contribution to the health service.

We proudly acknowledge the strength and resilience of First Nation peoples as the world's oldest living culture and the contribution of generations of Aboriginal leaders who have fought tirelessly for the rights of their people and communities.

We recognise the intergenerational consequences of colonisation, dispossession, child removal and other discriminatory government policies and acknowledge that the impacts and structures of colonisation still exist today.

We are committed to developing strong and enduring self-determined partnerships with Aboriginal communities that will contribute to growing a prosperous, healthy and strong Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recognition statement

BRHS pays respect to and recognises the contribution of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living and working in Victoria.

Throughout this document the term 'Aboriginal' is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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FOREWORD

On behalf of the Bairnsdale Regional Health Service (BRHS) Board and Executive team, it is with pleasure we present our first Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP).

This plan demonstrates our organisational commitment to gender equality, diversity and inclusion.

This is an exciting step aiming to improve gender equality within our organisation, which will have a positive impact on our workforce and our community.

Inequality and discrimination can occur in many forms, be multi-layered and concealed.

Inequality and discrimination are not tolerated at BRHS. Although this is reinforced by our organisational policies and systems and the Victorian Public Sector Code of Conduct, we know that there is more we can do to reduce disparity and prejudice.

Our GEAP provides a strong framework to guide BRHS to be a workplace that is inclusive, diverse and equitable for all.

Gender equality is a human right and precondition for social justice.

A workplace where people can be themselves and gender diversity and inclusion is fostered should be the “norm.”

Our mission is to provide quality health and well-being services that deliver the best possible health outcomes to our community.

To achieve this, it is crucial that BRHS has an engaged workforce where staff feel valued, safe, supported and respected for who they are.

There are high levels of socio-economic disadvantage in East Gippsland, in comparison to other areas in Victoria, and as the largest employer in East Gippsland, our workforce is a microcosm of our regional community.

To better meet the needs of our community, we need to improve our understanding of intersectional disadvantage, strive for a more diverse workforce and achieve a truly inclusive culture.

BRHS is committed to this improvement journey.

We are looking forward to growing our knowledge and increasing our “gender lens” to ensure that BRHS becomes a leader in inclusion, equality and diversity.

”

We know that there is more we can do to reduce disparity and prejudice.



Robyn Hayles
Chief Executive Officer



Chris Barry
Board Chair

ABOUT BRHS



Bairnsdale Regional Health Service (BRHS) is a multifaceted and growing regional health service providing a comprehensive array of health care services to the East Gippsland community.

Our role is to provide health care services to optimise community health and wellbeing.

At BRHS, we understand the health needs of our community and the importance of collaborating with others to deliver the best outcomes and address health inequity.

Located in the beautiful Victorian region of East Gippsland, our local community relishes a relaxed lifestyle living close to the Gippsland Lakes with easy access to isolated beaches, the high country and snowfields.

As the region's largest employer, BRHS is a magnet that attracts talented professionals to the region.

Three main campuses in the Bairnsdale township provide a wide range of professional specialties for staff and students, enabling a multitude of opportunities to achieve their professional goals while maintaining work-life balance.

BRHS is located on the lands of the Gunaikurnai people.

Our Mission

To provide quality health and wellbeing services that deliver the best possible health outcomes to our community.

Our Purpose

To improve the lives of our patients, their families and our community.

Our Principles of Care

We are committed to providing the highest level of treatment to the people of East Gippsland, delivered with care and compassion for every individual.

DEFINITIONS

Discrimination

Discrimination happens when a person, or a group of people, is treated less favourably than another person or group because of their background or certain personal characteristics.

This is known as 'direct discrimination'.¹

Gender

The way in which a person identifies or expresses their masculine or feminine characteristics. A person's gender identity or gender expression is not always exclusively male or female and may change over time.²

Gender Equality

The equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men and trans and gender-diverse people. Equality does not mean that women, men and trans and gender diverse people will become the same but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on their gender.³

Gender Equity

Entails 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.³

Gender diverse and non-binary

Gender diverse and non-binary refers to people who do not identify as a woman or a man. In the same way that sexual orientation and gender expression are not binaries, gender identity is not a binary either. It is important to challenge our thinking beyond the binary constructs of male and female.³

Gender Stereotypes

Simplistic generalisations about the gender attributes, differences and roles.³

Gender Norms and Structures

Ideas about how people should be and act according to the gender they are assigned or identify with. We internalise and learn these 'rules' early in life. This sets up a life-cycle of gender socialisation and stereotyping.³

Intersectionality

The interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.⁴

LGBTIQ+

This is an acronym to refer to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer people collectively.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is an unwelcome sexual advance, unwelcome request for sexual favours or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated, where a reasonable person would anticipate that reaction in the circumstances.⁵

Transgender

Transgender (often shortened to 'trans') refers to a person whose gender identity, gender expression or behavior does not align with their sex assigned at birth. In Australia, children are assigned as male or female at birth. Male children are raised as boys and female children are raised as girls. A person classified as female at birth who identifies as a man may use the label trans, transman or man. Similarly, a person classified as male at birth who identifies as a woman may use the label trans, transwoman or woman.³

1 Australian Human Rights Commission, Quick Guide: Discrimination <<https://humanrights.gov.au/quick-guide/12030>>

2 Australian Human Rights Commission, LGBTI Terminology <<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/lgbti/terminology>>

3 State of Victoria, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Safe and strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy <<https://www.vic.gov.au/safe-and-strong-victorian-gender-equality>>

4 Australian Government, Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Gender equality and intersecting forms of diversity, <<https://www.wgea.gov.au/gender-equality-and-diversity>>

5 Australian Human Rights Commission, Sexual Harassment in the Workplace, The Legal Definition of Sexual Harassment, <<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sexual-harassment-workplace-legal-definition-sexual-harassment>>

VISION



HISTORY OF GENDER EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION @ BRHS



As the largest health service provider in East Gippsland, BRHS recognises it plays an important role in leading change to improve gender equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace and the community.

Some key achievements to date include:

- Implementation of the Strengthening Hospitals Response to Family Violence (SHRFV) program in 2018
- Promotion of the 16 days of Activism against gender-based violence
- Development of an Aboriginal Employment Plan including the creation of Aboriginal traineeships and cadetships
- Implementation of an Aboriginal Cultural Safety Plan incorporating engagement, partnerships and cultural safety training
- Development of a Disability Action Plan
- Completion of Rainbow Tick training by People and Culture staff members
- Promotion of health and wellbeing and inclusion days including Women's Health Week, Men's Health Week, International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT), Wear It Purple Day, Close the Gap Day, National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week and World Harmony Day
- Implementation of the Baby Makes 3 program in 2018 as part of the Strengthening Gender Equality in Antenatal and Maternity Services Project
- Adoption of inclusive language as part of the implementation of the Electronic Medical Records system, and
- Application of policies and procedures offering workplace flexibility and support including flexible working arrangements, generous parental leave provisions, purchased leave, family violence leave and support, scholarship support scheme and professional development and study support processes.

BASELINE AUDIT ANALYSIS

A workplace gender audit was conducted in 2021, collecting both workforce and employee experience data. Data was measured and analysed against the Gender Equality Act 2020 workplace gender equality indicators to enable an assessment of what is working well in our organisation and what we could do better.

Following analysis and broad consultation, BRHS has developed strategies and actions under four priority areas that will assist us achieve our vision for gender equality at BRHS.



... Workplace Data Audit

Workforce audit data was gathered from the 2020-2021 financial year.

Data was obtained from internal data collection systems including the payroll system, industrial relations record management system and employee records.

The employee data gathered as at 30 June 2021 represents 983 employees.

Gender-disaggregated data was gathered to enable data to be shown separately for females and males.

Currently, the employee commencement process does not provide an opportunity for employees to identify as 'neither male nor female'. It has been recognised that we need to adapt and improve our data collection systems and this has been encompassed in our recommended strategies.

Intersectional data provides information on attributes such as Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, race, religion and sexual orientation. This data can assist understanding how gender inequality may be compounded by the impacts of disadvantage or discrimination that someone might experience based on these factors.

Data was gathered on Aboriginality and age, however BRHS does not collect employee information on disability, ethnicity, race, religion and sexual orientation through internal systems.

We are committed to improving data collection so that we can identify and address inequities experienced by all our diverse staff.

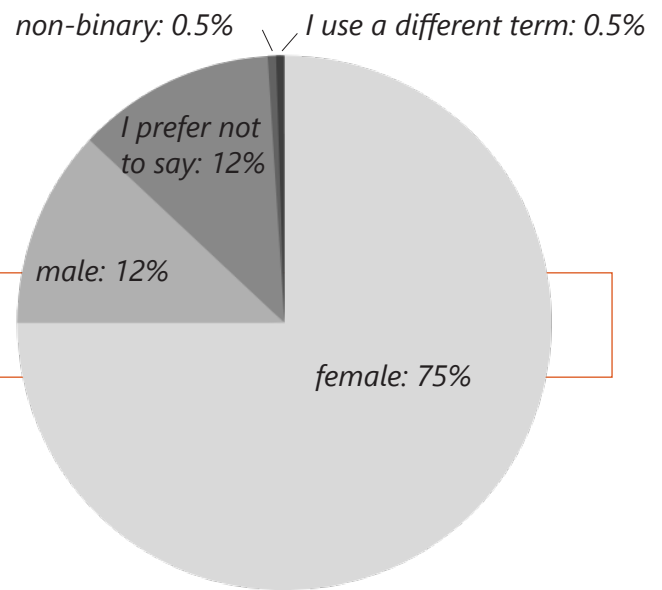
To enable a comparison between workforce levels, the workforce below the CEO was divided into 5 levels with Level 1 being the most senior and one reporting level away from the CEO.

••• Employee Experience Data

Employee experience data was obtained from the People Matter Survey conducted at BRHS in May 2021.

This survey was open for a 2-week period, with 413 employee responses received.

Participants in the 2021 People Matter Survey indicated their gender identity as:



To ensure employee confidentiality, the survey response data could not be dissected by all gender identity options because of the low number of participant responses from some gender identities and the inability to meet the required criteria for de-identified reporting.

Fifty-one survey respondents also preferred not to disclose their gender.

Effective interrogation of data with a gender lens was challenging as gender identities were not fully disclosed.

This has informed an action to further gain survey participant trust in the future, which may lead to disclosure of more information.

Survey response data by gender was reported via three categories:

- Female.
- Male/non-binary/use a different term.
- Prefer not to say.

Indicator 1

Gender Composition of the Workforce

As at 30 June 2021, the BRHS workforce comprised 81% females and 19% males.

This figure is comparable to the gender composition within our comparator group (similar public sector organisations in the health industry) used for the annual workforce data report produced by the Victoria Public Sector Commission.

The workforce systems currently in place do not capture a gender type other than that of male or female. Data reflecting employee attributes for disability, cultural identity, religion or sexual orientation is also not recorded.

This has been identified as an area for improvement and is included in our recommended strategies.

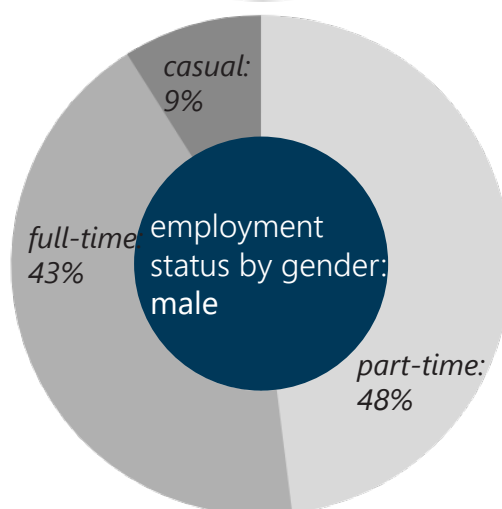
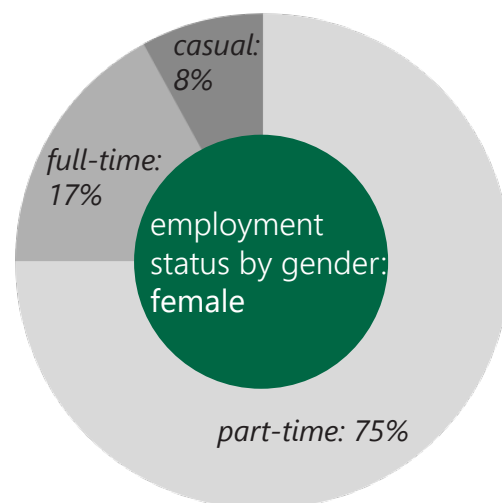
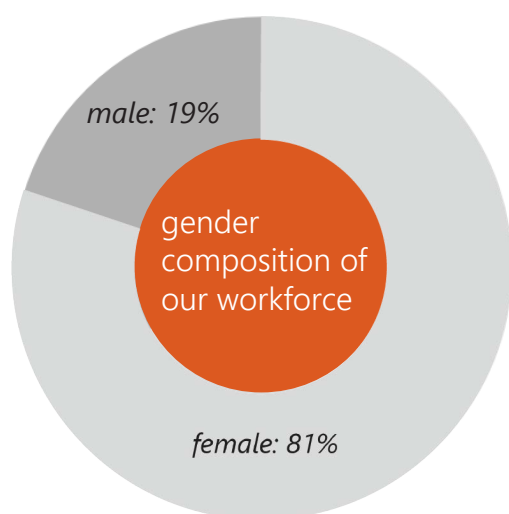
••• Workforce Data

A notable variation existed between genders in full-time and part-time employment status with a greater percentage of females working part-time in comparison to full time and in contrast to the number of males working part-time.

The proportion of male employees working full-time and part-time was reasonably even, as was the gender balance of casual employees.

The employee survey response showed that an overwhelming majority of employees were working their preferred contract type.

Out of the 64 respondents, only four indicated they would like an alternate contract with two of these respondents preferring a part time contract.

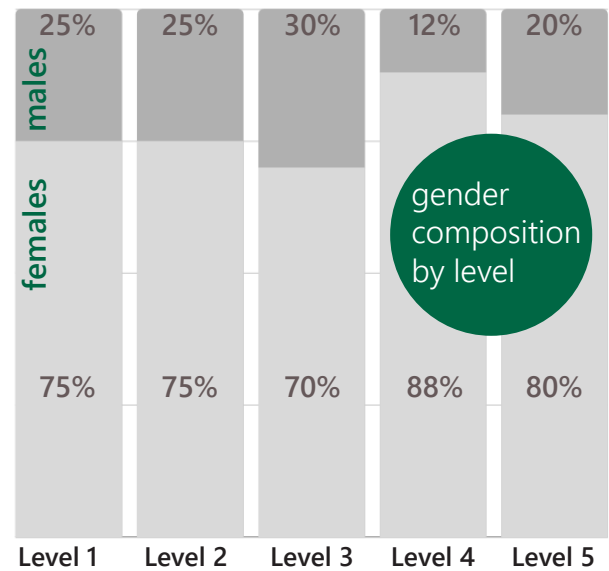
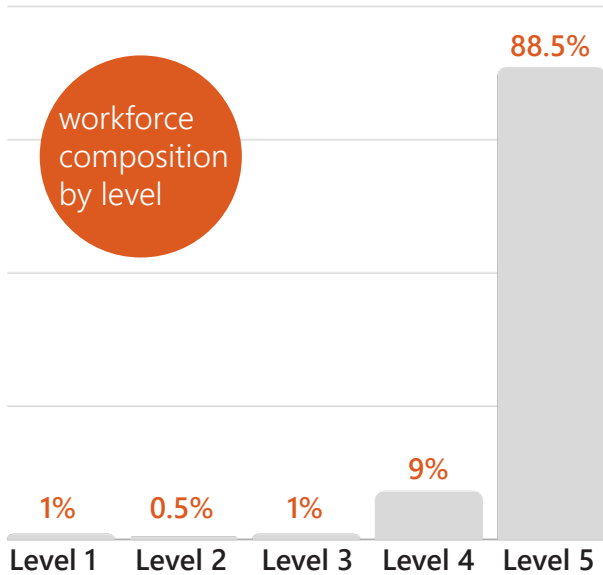


In all, 88.5% of the workforce is represented in Level 5, which consists of employees not classified as being in senior or leadership positions.

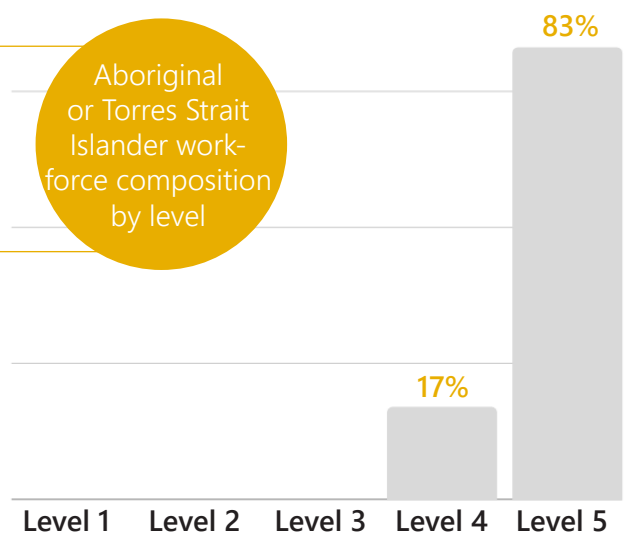
Male and female genders are represented at each level of the organisation.

The highest proportion of males exist at level 3, which reflects the Nurse Unit Manager group.

Level 4 consists of the highest proportion of females. This group represents Associate Nurse Unit Managers, Managers, Team Leaders and other senior clinical or corporate roles.



1.2% of the workforce identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander with all these employees represented at Level 4 and 5.



... Employee experience data

The responses to these questions showed that the group of employees who preferred not to disclose their gender identity disagreed the most with these statements, indicating that their overall perspective of workplace culture in regards to diversity is less positive.

The female response group provided the highest positive responses to all statements, except the statement on the culture in relation to employees with a disability.

The percentage of respondents to the People Matter Survey, by gender, who provided a positive response (chose "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed") with the following statements:

SURVEY QUESTION	Overall response	Female	Male/non-binary/ use a different term	Prefer not to say
There is a positive culture within my organisation in relation to employees of different sexes/genders	77%	81%	74%	55%
There is a positive culture within my organisation in relation to employees who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	81%	83%	80%	71%
There is a positive culture within my organisation in relation to employees from varied cultural backgrounds	76%	79%	72%	59%
There is a positive culture within my organisation in relation to employees of different age groups	74%	77%	72%	53%
There is a positive culture within my organisation in relation to employees who identify as LGBTIQ	64%	67%	59%	51%
There is a positive culture within my organisation in relation to employees with a disability	62%	64%	72%	45%

Indicator 2

Gender Composition of the Governing Body

Data for this indicator was gathered from internal human resource systems.

Data reflecting attributes for disability, cultural identity, religion, sexual orientation or diverse genders is not currently collected.

Data from the People Matter survey was not relevant to this indicator.

••• Workforce Data

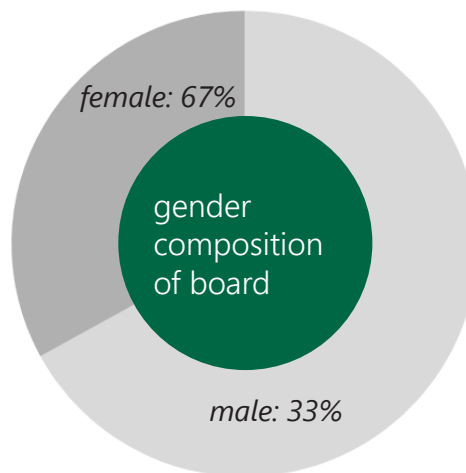
As at 30 June 2021, the BRHS Board of Directors consisted of 12 members.

Four members were female and 8 members were male.

62.5% of male members were in the age bracket 55-64 years.

The female membership was spread evenly across 4 age brackets.

No board members identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.



Indicator 3

Pay Equity

Remuneration data was obtained from the workplace data audit.

The People Matter survey did not provide information relevant to this indicator.

Workforce Data

The median total annualised base salary and total remuneration for the organisation overall showed a small gap of -0.4% indicating that the average annualised full-time base salary of females is slightly greater than males across the organisation.

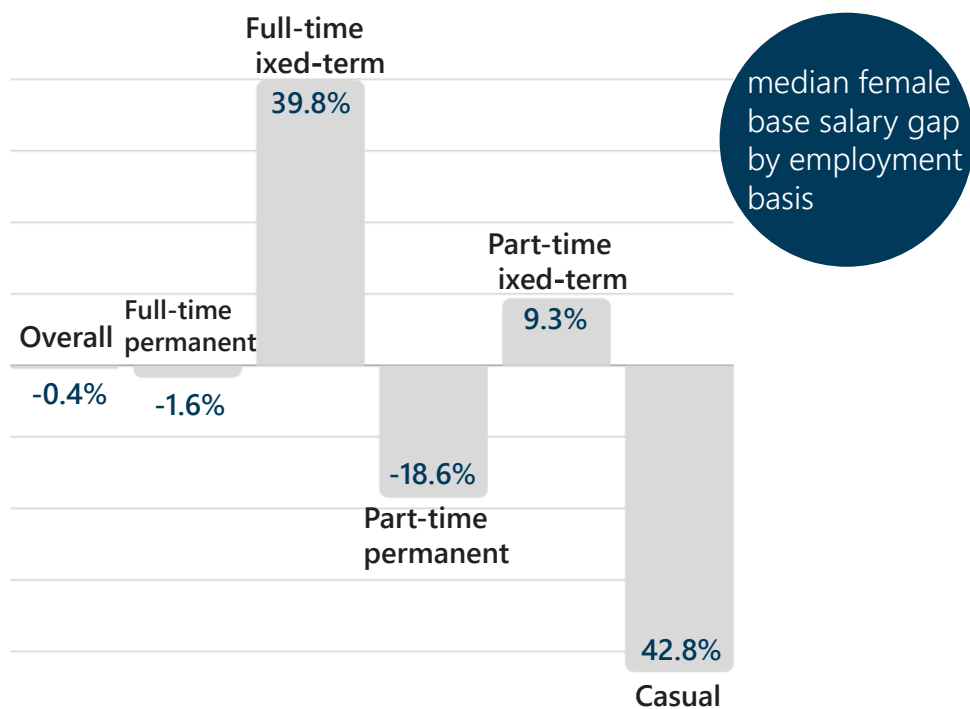
Data by employment status showed a significant gap for full-time, fixed-term roles in favour of males.

This can be partly explained by a number of the full-time, fixed-term roles at the senior level occupied by males.

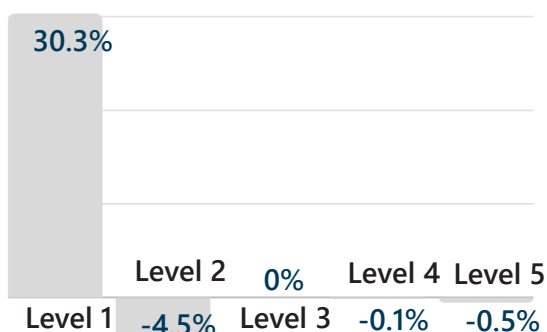
Employment status data also showed a large salary gap for casual positions in favour of females.

This is likely attributed to the types of casual roles within the organisation and the gender types that historically occupy these roles.

For example, a large proportion of casual positions are within the fields of nursing and administration and the data has shown that these professions are predominantly occupied by females.



median female base salary gap by employment level



Indicator 4

Sexual Harassment

Information on sexual harassment in the workplace from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 was obtained from human resource systems and the People Matter survey.

Data recording personal attributes for disability, cultural identity, religion, diverse genders or sexual orientation of complainants or respondents was not recorded.

... Workforce Data

The total number of sexual harassment complaints from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 was 7.

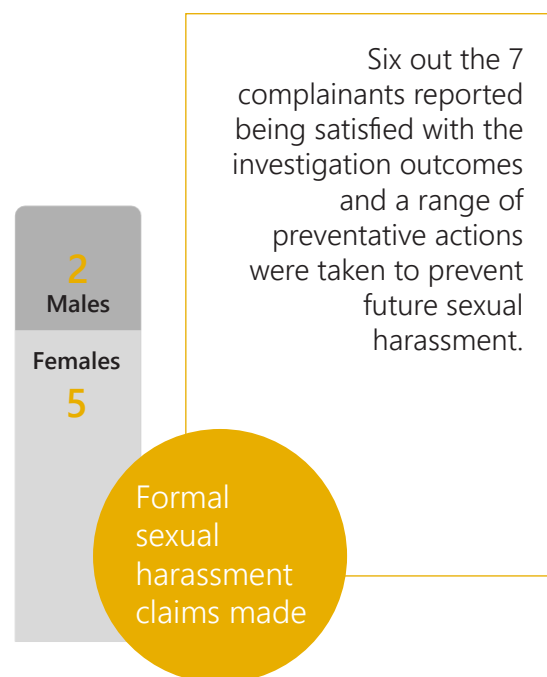
The complainants comprised five females and two males and all respondents were male.

Intersectional personal attributes are not sourced as part of this process, however the disclosure of intersectional personal attributes by some of these complainants indicates that some forms of disadvantage could have played a role in these incidents.

In the previous financial year of 2019-2020, no cases were formally lodged involving allegations of sexual harassment.

One sexual harassment case was reported in each of the 2018-2019 and 2017-2018 financial years.

These figures could indicate that sexual harassment has increased, however it is more likely that incidents have been under-reported in the past and as workplace systems and education have improved, formal reporting of undesired behaviours has increased.



... Employee experience data

The People Matter survey results indicate that 7% of survey participants have experienced some form of sexual harassment, which equates to 29 employees.

This number is substantially higher than the number of formal sexual harassment complaints lodged, prompting consideration of further strategies to discourage undesirable behaviour and encourage formal reporting of incidents.

The gender representation of respondents who experienced sexual harassment is spread quite evenly.

The group "prefer not to say" responded the least favourably to the survey statements relevant to this indicator.

The percentage of respondents to the People Matter Survey, by gender, who provided a positive response (chose "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed") with the following statements:

SURVEY QUESTION	Overall response	Female	Male/non-binary/ use a different term	Prefer not to say
Respondents who experienced sexual harassment, by gender	7%	6%	7%	8%
I feel safe to challenge inappropriate behaviour at work	60%	60%	70%	43%
My organisation takes steps to eliminate bullying, harassment and discrimination	57%	59%	63%	35%
My organisation encourages respectful workplace behaviours	76%	80%	72%	57%

Indicator 5

Recruitment and Promotion

Workforce data was not obtained for this indicator, however it was recognised that analysis of this data would be valuable.

As a result, recommended actions have been developed to ensure efficient collection of recruitment and promotion data in the future.

... Employee Experience Data

Despite only half of the People Matter Survey participants feeling that they have an equal chance at promotion, the statements referring to personal attributes as barriers to success received greater positive responses indicating that the majority of employees do not view discrimination in recruitment occurs because of intersectional attributes.

The data showed that the personal attribute of gender received the most favourable responses and disability received the least favourable responses.

The percentage of respondents to the People Matter Survey, by gender, who provided a positive response (chose "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed") with the following statements:

SURVEY QUESTION	Overall response	Female	Male/non-binary/ use a different term	Prefer not to say
My organisation makes fair recruitment and promotion decisions, based on merit	49%	55%	41%	57%
I feel I have an equal chance at promotion in my organisation	48%	49%	57%	35%
Gender is not a barrier to success in my organisation	83%	87%	76%	61%
Being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander is not a barrier to success in my organisation	80%	82%	80%	67%
Cultural background is not a barrier to success in my organisation	77%	80%	74%	59%
Sexual orientation is not a barrier to success in my organisation	78%	82%	74%	57%
Disability is not a barrier to success in my organisation	62%	65%	63%	41%
Age is not a barrier to success in my organisation	77%	81%	74%	57%

Indicator 6

Leave and Flexibility

This indicator provides workforce information on the availability and use of terms and conditions and practices relating to family violence leave, flexible working arrangements and working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities.

Workforce data was obtained from human resource and payroll systems and the People Matter survey.

Types of formal flexible working arrangements available for staff at BRHS and reflected in the data include:

- Compressed working week
- Flexible start and finish times
- Working remotely (negotiated by the employee only)
- Working part-time (negotiated by the employee only), and
- Shift swap/Roster flexibility.

... Workforce Data

Workforce data showed that 33 employees were engaged in a formal flexible working arrangement during the 2020-2021 reporting year.

This figure comprised 31 females and 2 males.

Employees at 4 of the 5 levels accessed a flexible working arrangement, however 73% of employees accessing a flexible working arrangement were employed at level 5.

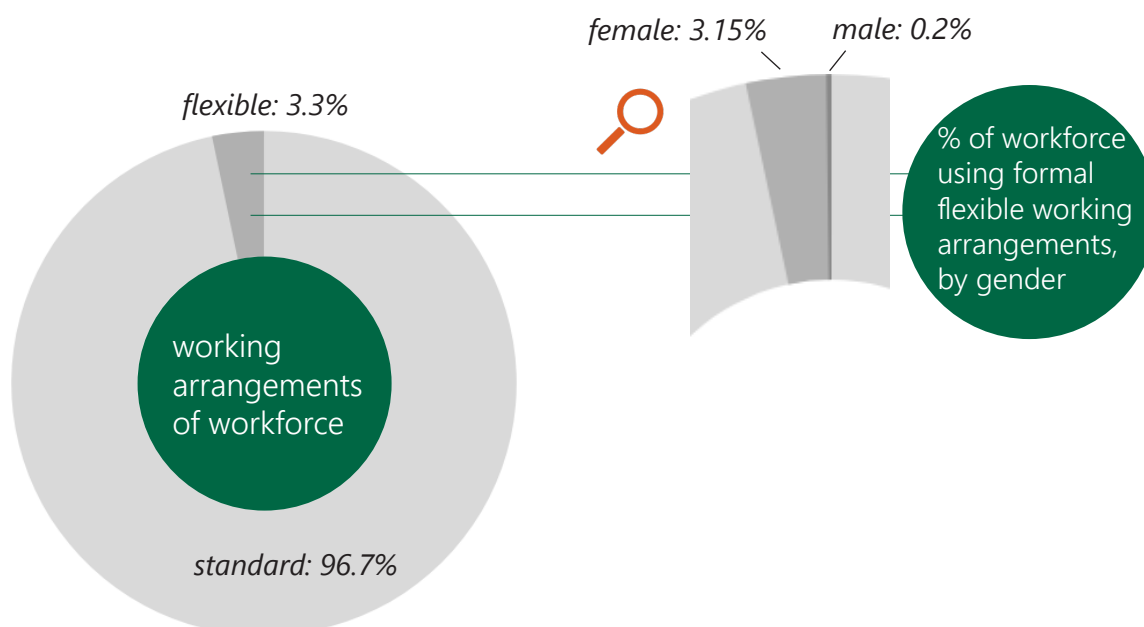
During the 2020-2021 reporting year, 49 employees accessed parental leave with 42 employees being female and 7 male.

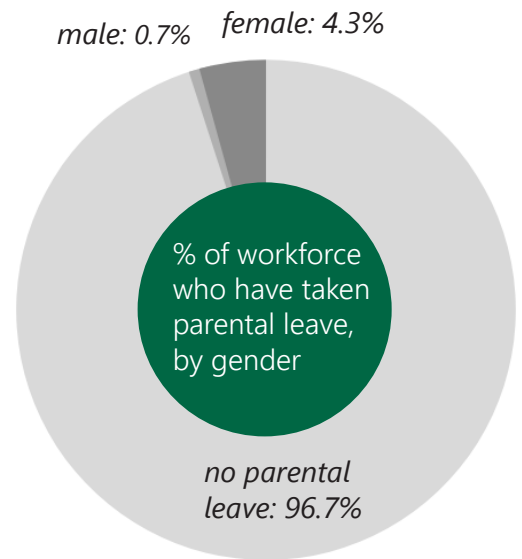
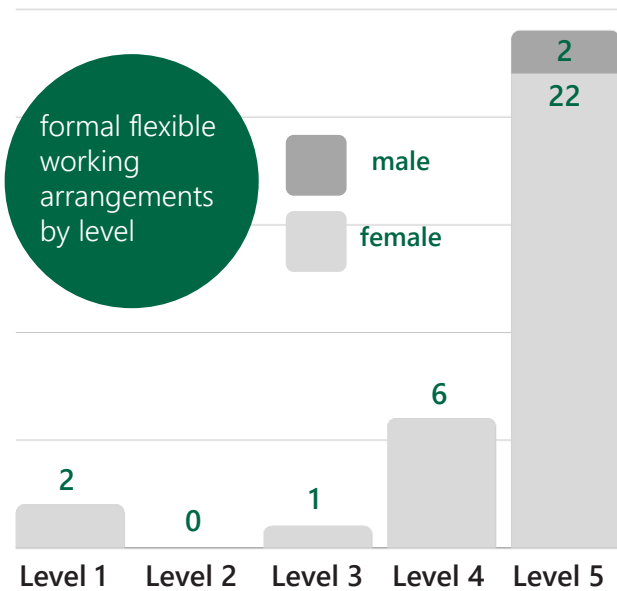
Of those, 94 per cent were employed at level 5.

Parental leave refers to both paid and unpaid leave.

No male employees accessed unpaid parental leave.

In the reporting year, 1 female exited the organisation during parental leave.





... Employee Experience Data

Responses to these survey questions indicated that employees had more confidence in receiving a supportive response to taking family violence leave, compared to a request for a flexible working arrangement.

The group of employees who preferred not to disclose their gender identity disagreed the most with these statements, indicating that they felt less supported by the organisation in regards to flexible work and leave arrangements.

The female response group provided the highest positive responses to all statements.

The percentage of respondents to the People Matter Survey, by gender, who provided a positive response (chose "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed") with the following statements:

SURVEY QUESTION	Overall response	Female	Male/non-binary/ use a different term	Prefer not to say
My organisation would support me if I needed to take family violence leave	71%	75%	63%	57%
I am confident that if I requested a flexible work arrangement, it would be given due consideration	60%	62%	61%	43%
My organisation supports employees with family or other caring responsibilities, regardless of gender	63%	68%	64%	47%

Indicator 7

Gendered Workforce Segregation

Workforce segregation by gender was informed by applying the occupation codes from the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) to all positions at BRHS.

ANZSCO is the skill-based classification used to categorise all occupations and jobs undertaken for profit in the Australian and New Zealand labour markets.

It is used in the collection and dissemination of all official statistics on occupation and is a key tenet of Australia's statistical infrastructure.¹

••• Workforce Data

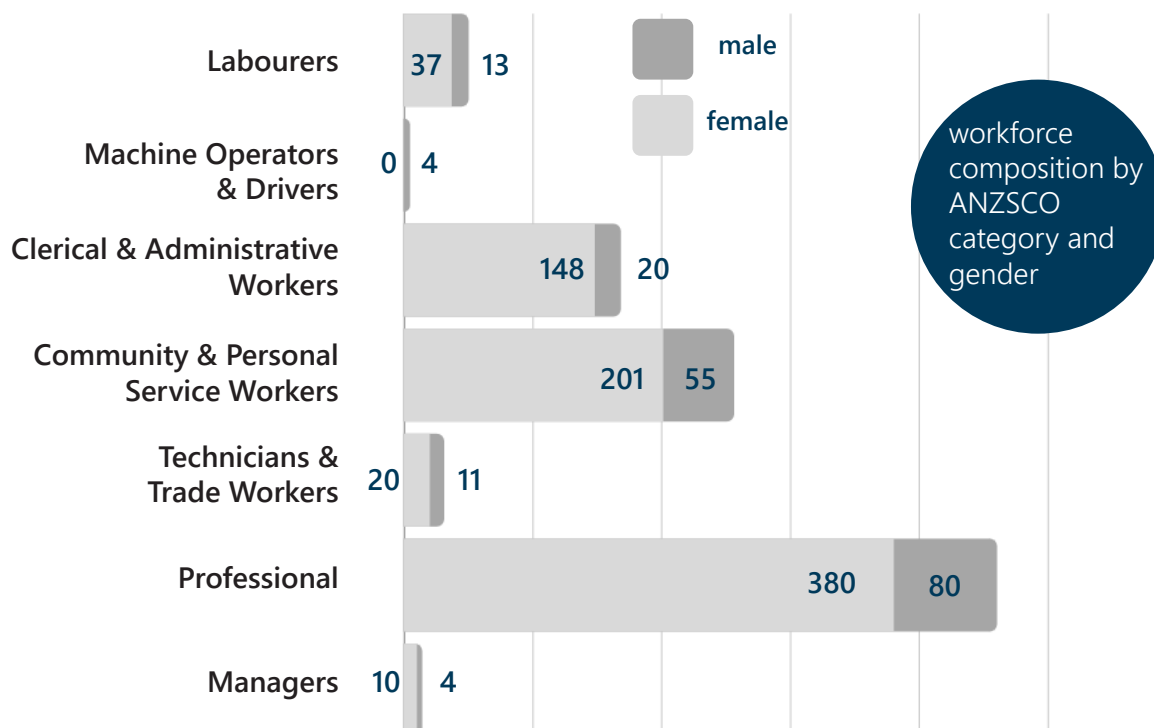
As at 30 June 2021, the BRHS workforce was represented in 7 of the 8 ANZSCO categories excluding the category of Sales Workers.

The "Professional" category consisted of the highest representation of both males and females.

To note, the ANZSCO categories do not provide an accurate representation of roles within the health service because these categories do not clearly reflect the positions and professional areas within the organisation.

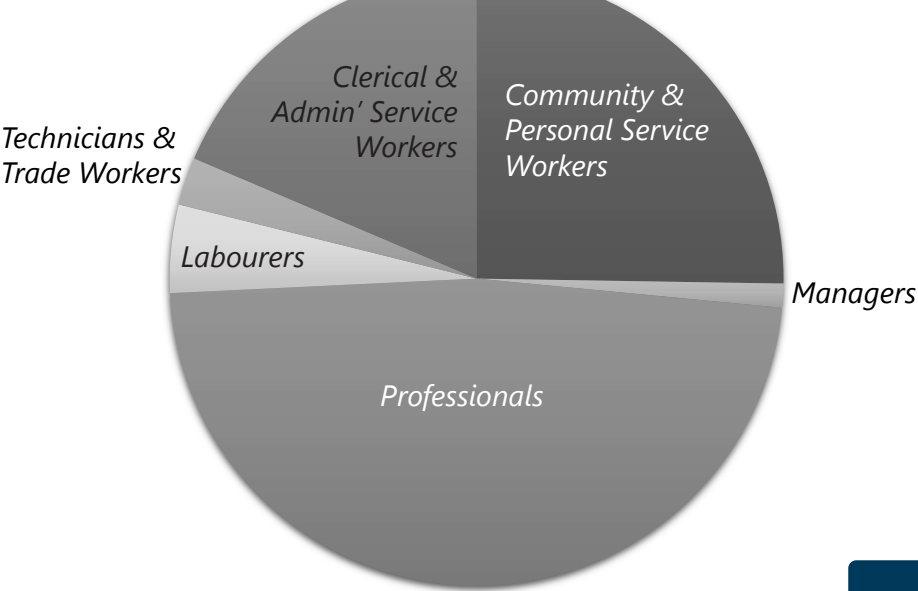
Analysis of workforce occupations using internal and health specific data collection systems (such as the organisational payroll system and Victorian Public Sector systems) will be more accurate.

This will be explored further as part of the action plan.



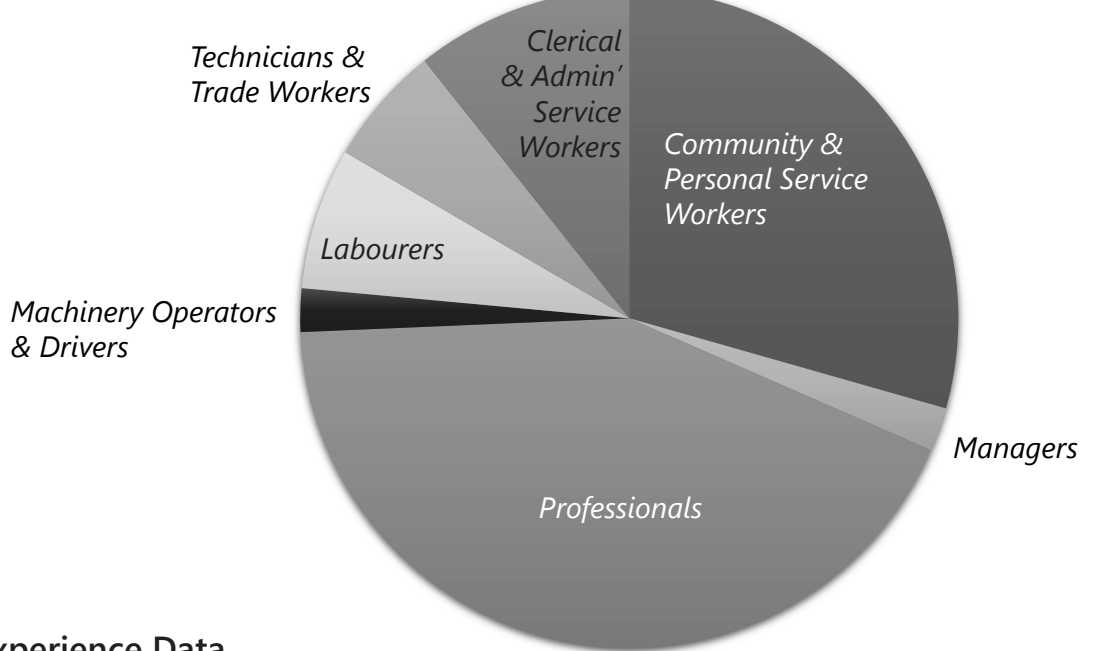
¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, How ANZSCO works, <<https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/how-anzsko-works#:~:text=ANZSCO%20is%20the%20skill%2Dbased,tenet%20of%20Australia's%20statistical%20infrastructure>>.

female



ANZSCO category representation as a proportion of gender

male



Employee Experience Data

Survey participants in the female and "male/non-binary/use a different term" groups responded in a similar manner to these statements indicating these groups hold a positive view on the organisation's approach to inclusiveness.

The percentage of respondents to the People Matter Survey, by gender, who provided a positive response (chose "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed") with the following statements:

SURVEY QUESTION	Overall response	Female	Male/non-binary/ use a different term	Prefer not to say
In my workgroup work is allocated fairly, regardless of gender	82%	85%	81%	65%
My organisation uses inclusive and respectful images and languages	82%	83%	85%	69%

CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT

Consultation occurred throughout the development of this action plan.

A range of methods were employed to communicate progress and gain feedback from various parties. An internal working group was established.

It consisted of 10 representatives from across the organisation - 7 females and 3 males representing a variety of areas and levels within the organisation and included a Director and General Manager.

The working group met regularly to progress the development of the action plan.

All employees were provided the opportunity to provide feedback on gender equality and contribute to the GEAP.

Employees were provided with the opportunity to attend a focus group and/or complete a survey. Focus groups were offered in a variety of formats including to specific gender identities only.

All staff were also encouraged to provide feedback via an online or hard copy survey and 68 responses were received.

Information stands were erected in 3 locations to assist promotion and discussion with employees.

Consultation with senior staff and the BRHS Board occurred through the delivery of presentations.

Thirty-seven Managers and Directors attended a presentation and workshop to increase their understanding on gender inequality in the workplace, discuss their responsibilities as leaders and obtain their feedback towards the GEAP.

A presentation was provided to members of the BRHS Board, which provided an update on work to date, key action plan priorities and discussion around the vision for the organisation.

Regular communication to employees has occurred through emails, news stories and updates to the new gender equality intranet page.

A new email address, gender.equality@brhs.com.au, has been created to provide an avenue for staff to communicate items on gender quality at any time.

“ Consultation feedback: quotes from employees

Theme: An understanding of gender equality varied significantly

“Your gender has no bearing on what you do at work and how you are treated.”

“Everyone is treated with fairness and respect and sensitivity regardless of their gender.”

“Being treated as a person, defined by my actions and abilities.”

“Equal pay, conditions and professional opportunities.”

“Unsure.”

Theme: A desire to increase knowledge and understanding across the organisation

"Better understanding of the history of healthcare discriminating against those LGBTQI+"

"More discussions and awareness on the issue."

"All staff including senior staff to attend mandatory competency training for gender equality and LGBTQI+ basic training (sensitivity, language, safety etc)."

"Active promotion of how staff can be allies to gender diverse communities."

"Education on how gender diverse people feel in terms of the way they are treated."

"Learn how to use appropriate inclusive language."

"More talking about it – workshops."

Theme: More can be done to convey a diverse and inclusive environment

"Making BRHS more visible in support for LGBTQIA community."

"Including pronouns on email signature and name badges."

"More signage showing we are inclusive around the hospital."

"Educate, provide community voice, ensure staff are safe to identify how they choose."

"Encourage more men to work at BRHS make it more inviting environment for men and younger people."

THE CASE FOR CHANGE

As the largest health provider and employer in East Gippsland, BRHS is in a strong position and has a responsibility to lead and champion gender equality.

BRHS is committed to providing the highest level of treatment to the people of East Gippsland, delivered with care and compassion for every individual, every time.

Our 4 Principles of Care are Quality, Integrity, Communication and Kindness. We treat each other with respect, empathy and compassion.

For our employees to perform their roles well, we must have an engaged workforce who feel valued, supported and respected for who they are.

All people should be free to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives without being limited by gender stereotypes, gender roles or prejudices.¹

BRHS will respond to the unique needs of our employees and will strive to create an inclusive environment where a culture of respect, fairness and kindness is prioritised.

BRHS continues to perform significant work in the prevention of family violence and Aboriginal cultural education, however it is recognised that other forms of intersectional disadvantage require attention from a workforce perspective.

For real change to occur, we must increase our knowledge of systemic inequality, develop more opportunities for equitable practice and recognise the importance and value of a diverse and inclusive workplace.

The gender equality principles outlined in The Gender Equality Act 2020 are closely aligned with the Victorian Public Sector Code of Conduct and the BRHS Strategic Plan which are inherent in BRHS operations.

BRHS acknowledges the gender equality principles and is committed to ensuring the implementation and progress of our GEAP is guided by these principles.

Gender Equality Act 2020 gender equality principles:

- All Victorians should live in a safe and equal society and have access to equal power, resources and opportunities and be treated with dignity, respect and fairness.
- Gender equality benefits all Victorians regardless of gender.
- Gender equality is a human right and precondition to social justice.
- Gender equality brings significant economic, social and health benefits for Victoria.
- Gender equality is a precondition for the prevention of family violence and other forms of violence against women and girls.
- Advancing gender equality is a shared responsibility across the Victorian community.
- All human beings, regardless of gender, should be free to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives without being limited by gender stereotypes, gender roles or prejudices.
- 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.
- Women have historically experienced discrimination and disadvantage on the basis of sex and gender.
- Special measures may be necessary to achieve gender equality.

1 Victorian Gender Equality Act 2020

STRATEGIES & MEASURES

The action plan has been developed using a framework of four focus areas:

- Strategy, Leadership and Accountability
- Employment and Careers
- Culture and Safety
- Data and Reporting

Responsibility definitions:

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

DPC – Director People and Culture

MCM – Media and Communications Manager

QE – Quality and Education

PC – People and Culture

GSM – General Services Manager

GHA – Gippsland Health Alliance

STRATEGY, LEADERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Strategy	Actions	Responsibility	Timeline (due)	Measure
1. Ensure organisational frameworks provide strong governance, support and leadership for implementation of the Gender Equality Action Plan	1.1 Establish a robust reporting and governance structure to ensure accountability and timely delivery of the Gender Equality Action Plan	CEO	Q3 2022	Governance structure established
	1.2 Allocate appropriate resources, including staffing, budget and executive sponsorship to ensure effective implementation of actions	CEO & DPC	Q4 2022	Business case approved
	1.3 Establish regular communication/feedback mechanisms where progress on the Gender Equality Action Plan is provided to staff and the community	PC & MCM	Q4 2022	Stories and updates published on intranet, website and social media
	1.4 Develop partnerships and strong working relationships between key stakeholders to achieve a holistic organisational approach to diversity, equality and inclusion	PC	Q4 2022	Partnerships/working groups created
2. Ensure organisational strategy, policies, procedures and systems promote gender equality in the workplace	2.1 Establish a process that systematically reviews policies and guidelines to ensure they are inclusive and free from gender bias and discrimination	QE	Q4 2022	Processes established
	2.2 Educate the workforce to apply a "gender lens" to policy development, review and decision-making and ensure gender impact assessments are embedded into organisational policy processes	QE	Q2 2023	Education delivered and gender impact assessments are occurring
	2.3 Review and revise the communications policy and corporate style guide to promote the use of inclusive language	MCM	Q4 2022	Communications policy and style guide reviewed and updated
3. Leaders to foster and support gender equality	3.1 Increase capability by delivering training to leaders on gender equality and inclusive leadership practices	PC & QE	Q4 2022	Training program implemented
	3.2 Leadership position descriptions to be reviewed and include clearly defined responsibilities on inclusive practice	PC	Q3 2022	Position description templates updated
4. Organisational decision making to occur by groups with a diverse representation of members	4.1 Establish processes for recruitment to committees, working groups and decision making bodies that provide equitable opportunities for broader gender and intersectional representation	QE	Q1 2023	Terms of reference template updated
	4.2 Advocate for a gender balance on decision-making bodies and committees. Consider adopting the 40/40/20 rule: 40% women, 40% men, 20% flexible in response to environment, and/or gender non-binary	PC	Q1 2023	Education delivered and policies updated
	4.3 Strive for a more gender-balanced composition of board members	Board	Q2 2023	Gender balance composition achieved and maintained

EMPLOYMENT AND CAREERS

Strategy	Actions	Responsibility	Timeline (due)	Measure
5. Strengthen organisational processes to assist reduce the pay equity gap	5.1 Further interrogate remuneration data to improve understanding of gender pay gaps and the causes and provide a report to CEO on findings and recommendations	PC	Q3 2023	Report produced
	5.2 Develop a fair and equitable process to guide decision making and transparency when remuneration is being set and reviewed	DPC	Q4 2022	Policy and procedure developed and implemented.
6. Ensure all staff feel supported and have equal access to flexible working options and family violence leave	6.1 Review flexible working policies and procedures to ensure processes are free from gender bias and flexible role design is encouraged	PC	Q1 2024	Policies and procedures reviewed
	6.2 Review family violence policies and procedures to ensure they are victim-centric and in line with industry best practice	PC	Q2 2025	Policies and procedures reviewed
	6.3 Implement a communications plan to ensure all staff are aware of opportunities to request flexible working arrangements and flexible leave options	MC	Q2 2024	Communications plan implemented
	6.4 Build the capacity of Managers and Team Leaders to consider alternative role designs to ensure staff on flexible work arrangements have access to meaningful work and equal opportunities	PC	Q3 2024	Education delivered and support systems created
7. Develop better systems to support and monitor employee development and internal career movement	7.1 Ensure professional development opportunities are available to all staff regardless of their gender or working arrangements	QE & Managers	Q1 2025	Education delivered and policy and procedure reviewed
	7.2 As part of workforce and succession planning processes consider innovative and supportive programs to support the career progression of part-time and casual employees	DPC	Q2 2025	Programs developed
	7.3 Enhance systems and develop processes to improve tracking and reporting of internal career movement	PC	Q3 2023	Implementation of system
8. Build processes and create opportunities to achieve a more diverse workforce	8.1 Review recruitment policies and procedures to ensure they are inclusive and free of bias and discrimination	PC	Q1 2024	Policies and procedures reviewed
	8.2 Develop new recruitment strategies and systems to increase diversity and inclusion in the workforce	PC	Q3 2023	New recruitment strategies created
	8.3 Implement training and use of industry tools to ensure that inclusive language and images are used in job advertisements and recruitment related advertising	PC	Q2 2023	Inclusive advertising implemented
	8.4 Develop an education program to improve staff knowledge and capability on bias free recruitment processes	PC & QE	Q4 2023	Education has been delivered
	8.5 Further investigate the causes of gender imbalance of organisational professions and levels and develop recommendations	PC	Q1 2025	Analysis occurred and recommendations incorporated into recruitment policy and procedure
9. Strengthen processes to grow and support a diverse workforce	9.1 Strengthen support systems for employees who are more likely to experience disadvantage and intersectional disadvantage due to their identity	PC	Q1 2024	Identification of support available and communication of pathways
	9.2 Development and implement support strategies to assist females, males and employees of diverse genders through key life stages	PC	Q3 2024	Support strategies implemented

CULTURE AND SAFETY

Strategy	Actions	Responsibility	Timeline (due)	Measure
10. Ensure the physical environment at BRHS does not present any barriers to employees in respect to gender	10.1 Conduct a physical assessment of the buildings and grounds of all campuses to determine if barriers exist in relation to a person's gender and develop recommendations	GSM	Q4 2022	Assessment completed and recommendations developed
	10.2 Review uniform policy and process to remove gendered uniform requirements	PC	Q3 2022	Policy and process reviewed
11. Improve employee awareness and understanding of gender inequality	11.1 Engage (external) subject matter experts and people with a lived experience to develop workforce understanding of gender equality. (Incorporate into IDAHOBIT promotion)	PC	Q2 2023	Subject matter experts engaged and ongoing relationships established
	11.2 Develop an education plan that increases employee understanding of the value of gender equality. Training on stereotypes, inclusion and diversity, conscious and unconscious bias to be incorporated	QE	Q2 2023	Education plan developed
	11.3 Commenced delivery of diversity and inclusion education	QE	Q3 2023	Education commenced
12. Improve knowledge and understanding of employees from diverse backgrounds and ensure support systems are in place	12.1 Develop an education plan that increases employee understanding of intersectionality and the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace	QE	Q3 2022	Education plan developed
	12.2 Create a communication and promotion plan to raise awareness of gender equality, gender inclusion and the LGBTIQ community	MCM	Q4 2022	Communications plan developed
	12.3 Develop a new policy and process to support employee gender affirmation	PC	Q2 2023	Policy and process developed
	12.4 Develop a mechanism for informal feedback on gender equality to enable ongoing contribution from employees	PC	Q4 2022	Process developed
13. Improve organisational systems and culture to reduce the number of sexual harassment incidents within the workplace	13.1 Further investigate and address barriers to reporting sexual harassment incidents and improve systems	PC	Q1 2024	Investigation occurred and strategies evaluated
	13.2 Develop a regular awareness campaign to promote sexual harassment policies, procedures, internal reporting mechanisms and actions taken by the organisation	PC & MCM	Q2 2023	Communications plan developed
	13.3 Increase the number and profile of BRHS Workplace Contact Officers and their roles and consider expansion of program to include diversity and inclusion support	PC & MCM	Q1 2023	Communication and promotion delivered
	13.4 Raise the profile of the "Speaking Up for Safety" program to encourage people to act on inappropriate behaviour	PC (OHS)	Q4 2022	Communication and promotion delivered
	13.5 Ensure Equal Employment Opportunity policy and procedure specifically addresses gender harassment and clarify sexual harassment definitions	PC	Q1 2023	Policies and procedures reviewed and updated

DATA AND REPORTING

Strategy	Actions	Responsibility	Timeline (due)	Measure
14. Improve systems to enable improved access to employee intersectional and gender segregated data	14.1 Play an active role in the development and implementation of the new Human Resources Information System (HRIS) to improve capacity for intersectional employee data collection and reports	GHA & PC	Q3 2023	Process reviewed and systems updated
	14.2 Improve the promotion of the People Matter Survey to increase the participation rate and to improve employee trust to disclose demographic information, including intersectional attributes	PC & MCM	Q4 2022 and Annually thereafter	Promotion occurred and reduction in number of employees selecting non-specific options for demographic data
15. Obtain further information on intersectional gender inequality at BRHS to inform future strategies	15.1 Develop a feedback process to collect feedback from employees who experience intersectional gender inequality	PC	Q4 2023	Feedback process implemented
	15.2 Obtain and review intersectional data provided through human resource processes such as exit interviews, annual reviews and grievances	PC	Q1 2024	Data analysed and referred to with strategy development in the future

RESOURCING PLAN

Implementation of strategies and actions will be resourced by cross-functional team members as assigned in the action plan.

The Director, People and Culture, will oversee the overall implementation of the action plan with responsibilities allocated to appropriate roles within the department.

This plan will be governed by the Executive Governance Committee and monitored through regular reporting against the plan to both the Executive Committee and the Board.

The organisation has committed to a staffing review of the People and Culture department to enable additional resourcing to support the plans implementation.

MONITORING & REPORTING

Method	Responsibility	Timeframe	Provided to
Project report outlining progress against measures	P&C Officer	Monthly	Executive Governance Committee
Project report outlining progress against measures	P&C Officer	Annual	Board, staff & community
Review of action plan, and resourcing to ensure strategies and timelines remain on track	P&C Officer	Annual	Executive Governance Committee
Project updates internal communication channels	P&C Officer and Communications Manager	6 monthly (as a minimum)	Staff
Project progress report	P&C Officer	Biannually (31 October 2023)	Commission for Gender Equality

**“Everyone has a unique life story, and deserves to be heard,
without retribution or judgement.”**

Laurea Atkinson
BRHS Gender Equality Working Group

BRHS
Bairnsdale Regional
Health Service
