



# Zoos Victoria Gender Equality Action Plan

2021 – 2025





## ***Introduction***

Gender inequality is persistent and still a significant issue across Australian society today. Zoos Victoria has a significant role to play in influencing change and proactively driving equality within our organisation, the public sector and the broader community. Our strong workplace values of always compassionate, inclusive, optimistic and curious are at the heart of our approach to remove barriers and change attitudes and behaviours that impact on achieving true gender equality.

*‘Zoos Victoria is an ambitious and optimistic organisation. We value compassion and inclusivity. Every day, we work for a planet that is kinder to wildlife, animals and people. The Gender Equality Plan is an important step forward for Zoos Victoria. While we have much success in the treatment and recognition of all genders, we acknowledge that we can be better.*

*I encourage all staff to adopt this plan and think about how we can build gender equality and inclusivity into our daily work.’*

**CEO, DR JENNY GRAY**

The Gender Equality Act 2020 (the Act) requires Zoos Victoria to develop a Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) every four years. The primary focus of the strategies and measure on our GEAP are focused on promoting gender equality in our workplace. Our GEAP will help us to plan, implement and measure change.

### **Why is gender equality important?**

Gender Equality is still an issue across all levels of society. Gender equality is when people of all genders have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities.

Everyone is affected by gender inequality - women, men, trans, non-binary and gender diverse people, children and families. It impacts people of all ages and backgrounds.

We need gender equality urgently. Gender equality prevents violence against women and girls. Societies that value all people irrelevant of their gender identity as equal are safer and healthier. Gender equality is a human right.

Everyone benefits from gender equality.

Some of the other benefits of workplace gender equality include:

- Improved productivity, economic and social outcomes.
- Improved engagement and wellbeing of our people and visitors.
- Increased organisational performance.
- Enhanced ability of our organisation to attract talent and retain employees.
- Enhanced capacity to innovate in order to solve complex problems during changing conditions.
- Enhanced ability of our organisations to engage with Victoria’s diverse community.

## Our proud history of gender equality work

Zoos Victoria has an exciting and proud history supporting our amazing staff of all gender identities to achieve their potential and expand their influence and impact on their colleagues, peers and the broader community. Some of the exceptional work we have done over recent years particularly for women includes:

- Supporting women to hold leadership positions and demonstrate leadership nationally and internationally. For example:
  - Representation on the International Zoo Educators Board, ZAA Conservation Engagement Committee, World Association of Zoos and Aquariums.
  - One of our leaders is a Climate Reality Leader and Mentor, and Mentor Development Coach for the Climate Reality Leader Training.
  - Many of our female leaders regularly present at local, national and international conferences.
  - Providing females with career development opportunities to extend their skills.
- Our Education team regularly run events such as Women in Science breakfast and Women in STEM conference for girls in Year 7-10 which is run in conjunction with other women leaders and the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria.
- A new Youth Leadership program (5-month intensive course) was piloted in 2021 with a single girl's school. The program aims to develop conservation leadership capacities and capabilities in young people.
- Celebrating International Women's Day and many other days that champion women such as World VET Nurse Day and International Women and Girls in Science Day.
- Supporting women to undertake PhD's and leadership development opportunities through Women and Leadership Australia in the Executive Ready and Leadership Edge Programs.

- Our current Board has 6 of members that are women, including a female Chair. Our Senior Executive team is made up of 5 women and 4 men, including a female CEO.
- From an all of organisation perspective, we do not have a gender pay gap.
- Supporting one of our leaders to be a Superstar of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). This program aims to smash society's gender assumptions about scientists and increase the public visibility of women in STEM. Science Technology Australia started Superstars of STEM to create a critical mass of celebrity Australian women who work as scientists and technologists - role models for young women and girls – and to work towards equal representation in the media of women and men working in all fields in STEM.
- One of our incredible female leaders completed the Homeward Bound Leadership program to Antarctica. Homeward Bound is a transformational leadership initiative for women with a background in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics, medicine), from around the world. The program supports women to significantly improve their clarity, confidence, shared vision and strategic capability, to enhance their opportunity to take up leadership roles globally, and to proactively contribute to a sustainable world, both individually and collectively. The program also provides a greater focus on the concept of a 'global home' – led with integrity, a drive for results, an ability to motivate others, a deep care for relationships and the will to collaborate towards this shared ambition.

We are looking forward to working on our GEAP 2022 - 2025 to enhance, deepen and expand our gender equality work and continue to be a leader in our industry.



## The current challenges for Zoos Victoria

Our statistics with respect to roles, pay and development opportunities shows an overall parity only achievable with a genuine and ongoing commitment to gender equity. Our workforce is made up of 65% women, which carries through all levels of the organisation including the Board.

Despite the overall healthy picture there are areas where ZV experiences ongoing, nuanced challenges which will be addressed by this plan:

1. Flexibility of work hours is linked to the nature of work at Zoos Victoria as an organisation that operates 10 hours a day 365 days a year:
  - a. Employees are seeking even more flexible work arrangements particularly our groundstaff and staff working on property.
  - b. Upskilling of managers is required to ensure flexible work arrangements are genuinely considered and responded to.
2. Attraction and retention of more individuals of all gender identities into individual teams that are gender skewed:
  - a. This will require better attraction strategies for men or women into non traditional roles. For example attracting more men into roles that are traditionally over represented by females in our Visitor Experience and Teaching teams. Attracting more women into physically strenuous and technical work in particular teams such as Assets and Horticulture roles that are overrepresented by males. This also provides an opportunity to attract both women and men from more culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds into roles that they may not have considered previously.
  - b. A review of some roles may be required to assess the barriers of attracting diversity into particularly teams.
3. Sexual harassment and bullying remain higher than desirable despite increased awareness and training, strong leadership attitudes and behaviours around zero tolerance and immediate action taken on serious incidents:
  - a. Further consultation and root cause analysis is required to deepen our understanding of work climates and power imbalances.
  - b. A comprehensive zero tolerance campaign about sexual harassment is also required. Using the Zoos Victoria Connect, Understand and Act model to develop the campaign will assist to drive the change required.
  - c. Developing and implementing a process that provides a more supportive victim-centric approach and case management of sexual harassment complaints will strengthen our approach.
  - d. Continuing to implement team specific interventions and initiatives where required.
4. Development of further strategies to address intersectional issues:
  - a. Improve our data on intersectionality by conducting a workplace census.
  - b. Addressing barriers that are impacting our different intersectional groups across the organisation.
  - c. Expand our training and employment pathways for various priority groups including people with a Disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds.



# Development of our GEAP

2021 – 2025

*‘It’s a new and evolving world, and it’s important that we adapt our behaviour and beliefs along with it. We must work to change old views, and welcome people of all backgrounds in a respectful and harmonious way.’*

## 1. Gender Equality Principles

Zoos Victoria has a strong commitment to the Gender Equality principles in the Act and they have guided the work that we have outlined in our GEAP. The principles are:

- All Victorians should live in a safe and equal society, 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. For the purposes of this plan we refer to this concept as “intersectional gender inequality”.
- Women have historically experienced discrimination and disadvantage on the basis of sex and gender.
- Special measures may be necessary to achieve gender equality.

### Barriers and Insights

Some of the key systemic barriers to access, inclusion and equity for people who experience intersectional gender inequality at Zoos include:

- Recruitment and selection processes. Some of these processes are seen to be barriers to access and inclusion. Some examples provided were managers recruiting people similar to themselves, not having enough diversity on recruitment panels and recruitment processes that indirectly discriminate against some groups.
- Manager awareness. It was reported that some managers do not have enough awareness about intersectional gender inequality and the impacts that this has on staff. Managers reported difficulty allocating sufficient time for professional development and skilling themselves up in the different elements of gender equality. Organisationally more training is required to build a real depth of understanding at all levels.
- Not feeling safe to speak up particularly on issues related to sexual harassment.

Insights explored during the analysis of data and through the consultation process revealed that:

- Women are more likely to experience sexual harassment in our workplace.
- Staff who identify with a cultural identity other than Australian experience more negative feelings at work and are more likely to experience bullying.
- Staff who have family or carer responsibilities are more likely to experience negative feelings at work and are more likely to experience bullying or sexual harassment.
- Women who have a flexible work arrangement in place are more likely to think that this is a barrier to their success within the organisation and that the culture is not as positive because of their flexible arrangement.
- Staff think there is a less positive culture towards people with a disability.

## 2. Gender Pay Equity Principles

Further to the Gender Equality Principles, the pay equity principles developed by the Equal Workplaces Advisory Council have also been used in the development of the strategies and measures in our GEAP:

- Establishing equal pay for work of equal or comparable value. Equal or comparable value refers to work valued as equal in terms of skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions. This includes work of different types. The structure of our two Enterprise Bargaining Agreements provides the structure for establishing equal pay and our Gender Equality Audit demonstrates this is occurring.
- Freedom from bias and discrimination. Employment and pay practices are free from the effects of unconscious bias and assumptions based on gender. Regularly checking of this and ensuring recruiting managers are trained in and have an awareness of unconscious bias in their recruiting practices will minimise this.
- Transparency and accessibility. Employment and pay practices, pay rates and systems are transparent. Information is readily accessible and understandable through our two Enterprise Bargaining Agreements and relevant Human Resource policies and procedures.
- Relationship between paid and unpaid work. Employment and pay practices recognise and account for different patterns of labour force participation by workers who undertake unpaid and/or caring work. This is an important principle for ZV given that 65% of our workforce are women.
- Sustainability. Interventions and solutions are collectively developed and agreed, sustainable and enduring which will be monitored regularly over the next four years.
- Participation and engagement. Workers, unions and employers work collaboratively to achieve mutually agreed outcomes. Our Gender Equality Working Group has been set up for both the initial and ongoing consultation and will meet quarterly once the GEAP has been finalised.

*Our staff commented in our Gender Equality survey that they want our workforce to be as exciting as we can be – diverse, devoted, dazzling, incredible, colourful, uplifting, safe and valued.*

## 3. Consultation

We would like to thank all our staff, union representatives and unions (CPSU, United Workers Union and CFMMEU) for all their involvement, feedback, ideas and commitment to developing our GEAP. An extensive consultation process was undertaken to develop our plan.

This included:

- The establishment of our GEAP working group. This group had representation from across the organisation both from the Property and Corporate perspective. This also included our CPSU union representatives and the CPSU Gender Equality Industrial Organiser.
- Consultation with the United Workers Union and the CFMMEU representatives and their Industrial Organisers.
- Consultation with all Senior Leadership Teams across the organisation.
- Consultation with Zoos Victoria Contact Officers.
- A Senior Leader Community of Practice session focused on what leaders can do better to help eliminate sexual harassment in our workplace.
- Focus groups with specific cohorts of staff for example staff with a Disability, Carer and family responsibilities and some culturally diverse groups.
- Engagement with staff through our engagement platform Workplace by Facebook, a survey and through a specific Gender Equality e-mail for staff to provide feedback.
- Drawing on research and best practice from our partners or relevant associations such as the Australian Network on Disability, Equal Employment Opportunity Network, Commission for Gender Equality, Grace Papers, 1800 Respect.



## How our plan complements our existing plans

Our GEAP complements and adds further richness to our key organisational plans which include our Diversity and Inclusion Plan, our Reconciliation Action Plan and our Access and Inclusion Plan. The key strategic objectives of our overarching Diversity and Inclusion Plan are:

### Strategic Objective 1

#### Leadership

Build the capability of our leaders (managers, staff and volunteers) to be diversity and inclusion champions.

### Strategic Objective 2

#### Employment

Increase the employment of people with a disability, from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and remove any barriers to employment.

### Strategic Objective 3

#### Education and Training

Provide ongoing education and training in cultural diversity and intercultural awareness for all our staff and volunteers.

### Strategic Objective 4

#### Engagement, Access and Inclusion

Actively engaging with and responding to our culturally diverse communities, visitors and priority groups.

### Strategic Objective 5

#### Outcomes

To demonstrate our outcomes through data and evidence based practices.

### Strategic Objective 6

#### Promotion

To be viewed as a sector leader and exemplar of practice and be able to give assistance to similar organisations starting on their journey to inclusive practice.

### Strategic Objective 7

#### Partnerships

To build on the existing partnerships that we have and extend our partnerships further.

We report regularly on our progress and the outcomes achieved against these plans. In some ways our GEAP complements our existing plans and in other ways it stretches us to go deeper and achieve more on diversity and inclusion particularly from an intersectional perspective.



## OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE



### Our vision for Gender Equality over the next four years is

- To be a safe and inclusive workplace that welcomes, values and celebrates equality and diversity'. Our staff told us in our Gender Equality survey that they want: A future where no matter a person's gender identity or background, everyone at Zoos Victoria is welcomed, treated equitably and feels safe.
- Our values reflect the way we behave in the workplace.
- Our workforce is as diverse as our community.
- Our workforce is thriving - no disadvantage for any gender or intersectional group.
- There is equal pay for equal work.
- There is zero sexual harassment.
- Our flexible work arrangements nurture and retain our workforce.
- Everyone has a home at ZV.
- We welcome all your differences.
- We welcome everyone.
- Exciting as we can be – diverse, devoted, dazzling, incredible, colourful, uplifting.
- Accepting and celebrating everyone for who they are.
- We actively strive to close any gaps.

## Leadership and Resourcing for the GEAP

Our GEAP has the full support and commitment from our Senior Executive Leadership team. Our Director of Business Development will be the Executive Sponsor of our GEAP and will facilitate our GEAP action working group which has been formed and will meet monthly to review our plan and bring it to life at the local level. Our working group has representatives from across the organisation on it. Our Director Human Resources will also be a part of this group to provide updates on organisational initiatives in this plan and to ensure an ongoing consultation process with our staff representatives both within the GEAP working group and with our union representatives and contact officers.

At a strategic level the Board and our People, Culture and Safety Committee we will ensure the success of the GEAP by monitoring the following key strategic indicators:

- Demonstrated improvements in the People Matter Survey on:
  - Gender Equality indicators
  - Intersectional indicators
  - Negative behaviour indicators
- Achievement of agreed employment targets on both gender and intersectional priorities
- Delivery of the strategies contained in this plan on time and to a high quality standard.

We will also review the leadership and staff behaviour key performance indicators and behaviours through our eZepp process (our performance management system). By building in appropriate measures into performance reviews this will help to ensure strong accountability on behaviours and actions from our plan.

Our GEAP will be reviewed regularly by our People Culture and Safety Committee and a yearly update will be provided to our Board. We will also ensure that there are appropriate budget allocations for training and development opportunities and consultancy support as required.




### Measuring progress

As mentioned above, our GEAP will be reviewed regularly by our People Culture and Safety Committee and a yearly update will be provided to our Board. We will report our progress in relation to the strategies set out in our plan to the Gender Equality Commission every second year.

Our GEAP working group will also give regular updates via our key engagement platform, Workplace by Facebook. This platform also enables live chats and will provide further opportunities for staff to give feedback as we progress with our plan.

As part of our implementation plan we will develop an easy English version of our plan and use this for all our staff when we formally launch our GEAP.

## Zoos Victoria Gender Equality Action Plan 2021 – 2025

Workplace Gender Equality Indicator	Strategy	Measures	Accountable	Timelines
 <p><b>Gender composition of all levels of the workforce</b></p>	<p>Develop specific attraction campaigns to attract gender diversity and all other types of diversity into non traditional roles eg. Assets, Horticulture, Visitor Experience, Teaching.</p> <p>Implement targeted gender secondment program across entity/government networks and encourage different networks to come together to skill up.</p>	<p>Gender composition increased by 20% for identified areas.</p> <p>Program developed and delivered.</p>	<p>HR Recruiting managers</p> <p>HR Relevant manager</p>	<p>June 2024</p> <p>June 2025</p>
 <p><b>Gender composition of governing bodies</b></p>	<p>Support the Victorian Government to encourage Board applicants from diverse backgrounds to apply for Board positions.</p>	<p>ZV Board reflects gender and intersectional diversity.</p>	<p>CEO Victorian Government</p>	<p>June 2023</p>
 <p><b>Equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value across all levels of the workforce irrespective of gender</b></p>	<p>Allocate a specific budget for resolving any pay discrepancies identified through gender pay gap analysis. Where relevant eliminate any gender pay gaps within the next four years.</p>	<p>No gender pay gap exists.</p>	<p>Senior executive team</p>	<p>June 2025</p>



**Workplace Gender Equality Indicator**
**Strategy**
**Measures**
**Accountable**
**Timelines**

**Sexual Harassment in the workplace**

Engage relevant organisations to run organisation-wide training to ensure leaders are aware of their responsibilities when a complaint is received.

Training delivered.

HR  
All leaders

June 2022 & June 2024

Develop and Implement a zero tolerance campaign about sexual harassment including information on consent. The campaign will have three main parts: • Creating a safe space • Normalising it but speaking regularly about sexual harassment • Calling it out

Campaign developed and rolled out.  
People Matter Survey result – Sexual Harassment 0%.

HR  
All leaders

March 2022

Develop and implement a process that provides a victim-centric approach to case management of sexual harassment complaints.

Victim centric approach embedded in policy and procedure Training delivered to leaders Positive feedback provided by complainant.

HR  
All leaders

June 2022

Set up anonymous reporting processes for instances of sexual harassment in the workplace and ensure that reporting processes include adequate response and support mechanisms.

Report on complaints received People Matter Survey result – Sexual Harassment – positive feedback on complaint mechanism.

HR  
All leaders

June 2023

Report all sexual harassment complaints to the People, Culture and Safety Committee and the Board as a standing workplace health and safety agenda item.

All complaints reported in a timely manner.

HR

March 2022 & ongoing

Provide ongoing training and professional development to our Contact Officers to ensure they are well supported when providing advice to others.

Training and professional development provided to Contact Officers.

HR  
Contact officers

Yearly

Ensure that the information loop is respectfully closed back to individuals or groups where relevant on action taken.

Feedback from complainant. Monthly survey – qualitative comments are positive.

HR  
Relevant leader

June 2022 & ongoing

Research, develop and implement an obligation to report requirement for all staff.

Requirement implemented.

Senior executive team  
HR

March 2023

Review and improve support in place for staff working after hours events to ensure appropriate support and escalation points are available on the event night.

Positive feedback from staff working after hours events.

HR  
Relevant leaders

September 2022


**Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace**

Develop attraction strategies and review recruitment processes to attract greater gender diversity in candidates both for staff and volunteer roles. For example, through reviewing language in job descriptions, composition of interview panels, shortlisting, and appointment processes.

Diversity of appointments made. Improved gender composition in particular teams.

HR  
Recruiting manager

December 2023

Provide refresher information on our Recruitment and Selection policy and processes, communicate a transparent process for secondment and acting opportunities and in appointment e-mails acknowledge reasons why the applicant was successful and celebrate the skills they bring to the role.

Refresher information developed and distributed. Updated information included in Recruitment training for managers.

HR  
Recruiting managers

June 2023

Provide unconscious bias training for all recruiting managers and develop training programs on issues revealed by any root cause analysis.

Training provided.

HR  
Recruiting managers

June 2022



**Availability and utilisation of terms, conditions and practices relating to family violence leave, flexible working arrangements and working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities**

Family violence leave. Develop, review and communicate in plain English family violence leave policies and processes to ensure they are victim-centric and in line with sector best practice.	Updated Family Violence leave information communicated to all staff.	HR	December 2022
Engage a relevant specialist organisation to run training for managers, HR and other key staff on how to support and respond to an employee experiencing family violence.	Training provided.	HR	June 2023 & June 2025
Build a culture of checking in consistently to ensure that staff making complaints or disclosures are supported, that issues raised are always taken seriously and dealt with appropriately and effectively.	Feedback from complaint and their support person.	HR Relevant leader	December 2022 & ongoing
Ensure there is a clear process to reallocate personal/sick leave to family violence leave as required.	Process implemented.	HR Payroll	February 2022
Review diverse and inclusive arrangements in both our Enterprise Bargaining Agreements including scope of different leave clauses to cover a broader range of relationships and potential new leave clauses.	Leave arrangements cover a more diverse range of relationships or situations.	HR	February 2023
Review our Flexible Work Arrangement policy and ensure it is being consistently applied and fully utilised.	Workplace data/reporting shows a positive uptake of Flexible Work Arrangements.	HR	March 2023
Review our Flexible work arrangements for all our groundstaff and people working on property including researching other sectors that have variable work shifts and reviewing what flexibility can be offered within rosters.	Flexible Work Arrangements reviewed and updated.	All leaders	October 2022
Upskill leaders in how they can respond to requests for flexible work arrangements.	Training delivered.	HR All leaders	November 2022
Create a campaign to encourage the use of informal flexible working (beyond remote working) to increase access and utilisation of flexible working.	Positive feedback from staff on the success of informal flexible arrangements.	All leaders	June 2023
Review parental leave policies to ensure they do not discourage a particular gender from taking up parental leave.	Policy and procedure updated and implemented.	HR	March 2022
Improve manager awareness on how to support staff with carer responsibilities.	Awareness session delivered People Matter Survey – improvement on 'having carer responsibilities is not a barrier to success'.	HR	December 2023
Develop a 'return from parental leave' guide to assist managers and staff incorporating policies and procedures, support, leave requirements.	Guide developed and implemented.	HR	December 2023

**Workplace Gender Equality Indicator**
**Strategy**
**Measures**
**Accountable**
**Timelines**

**Gendered segregation within the workplace**

Undertake a workplace census to capture all intersectional data on our workforce.	Census completed.	HR	September 2022
Analyse and report on the intersectional data once captured.	Data analysed and reported on.	HR	December 2022
Conduct several gender impact assessments.	Gender impact assessments completed and recommendation implemented.	HR Trained leaders	December 2024
Deliver inclusive language awareness/training to all.	Training delivered.	HR	December 2022
Expand traineeships and internships to support more diverse entry into non-traditional career pathways.	Reporting on number and type of traineeships/internships shows an increase.	HR	June 2023
Create an internal awareness campaign to help people understand the gendered segregation of occupations within the workplace, workforce and industry and the impact gender stereotypes can have on decisions about role type and level.	Awareness campaign implemented.	GEAP working group	December 2022
Provide information and awareness regarding gender identities and the use of pronouns.	Information and awareness training delivered.	GEAP working group	December 2022
Review and undertake a consultation process on bathroom facilities and consider gender neutral facilities.	All bathroom facilities reviewed.	Property operations managers	June 2024
Acknowledge and promote specific gender or intersectional relevant days or events throughout the year to build organisational awareness on key issues eg. Mens Health Week, International Womens Day, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign, NAIDOC week, Reconciliation Week, Pride March, Refugee week.	Significant days and event acknowledged or participated in.	GEAP working group	Yearly
Increase spiritual spaces for people with different backgrounds and faiths.	Number of spiritual spaces have increased across all three properties.	Property Directors	June 2025

