



Gender Equality Action Plan

2022 - 2026

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Acknowledgement

The rivers, waterways and deep water that support life and communities across our region have been doing so for millennia for thousands of generations of First Nations peoples. Aboriginal culture remains deeply tied to this timeline in an ongoing connection to Country, which includes land, air and water.

Their long history reminds us that when we consider the challenges we face now with a changing climate, the Gunaikurnai, Bunurong, Wurundjeri, Wadawurrung, Eastern Maar, Gunditjmara, and the many other First Nations peoples still seeking formal recognition across our region, have lived through extreme climate change for thousands of years on Country.

As we play our part in managing this precious resource for customers and communities, we know that we have much to learn. We will continue to seek ways to build mutual understanding and respect as we work with Traditional Owner groups across our region to honour their knowledge and ongoing connection.

Werribee Backbone of Country 2019. Mitch Mahoney (Boon Wurrung/Bunurong), commissioned by Southern Rural Water to mark the redevelopment of 1 Tower Road, Werribee.



Mitch shows the Werribee River as a sacred lifeblood for Aboriginal people and the animals, with the overlay of European settlement. Bringing the two together engages us in thinking about the river and its long life over many millennia under the stewardship of the Bunurong and Wadawurrung peoples.

Message from the Managing Director

I believe in people.

I believe unleashing people's creativity, ingenuity and imagination is the only way to drive progress.

I believe in being part of something bigger, something truly transformative and purposeful.

I believe the only way to achieve this is through diversity of people, diversity of experience and diversity of thought.

I am blessed to be part of a team that includes intelligent, strong and determined women who are challenging the status quo and driving great outcomes for our customers and the community every day in every way. Women who have vision, passion and a commitment to excellence.

I'm proud that we at Southern Rural Water have achieved gender balance on both our board and executive leadership team. We have made steps forward, but we still have a way to go. We are still striving for a better gender representation across our field teams and in our teams requiring science, engineering, technology and mathematics (STEM) skills.

Gender equality is not only the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do. I think about the women that I've turned to who have helped me see things differently and do things better throughout my career.

To achieve true equality we must address inherent biases in our efforts to recruit and retain, and match this with a culture of inclusion, creating an environment that welcomes all voices – big and small. It is more often the one small voice in the corner that provides you with the insight you need.

It is that voice that tells you that you haven't created the environment where everyone is welcomed. It is that voice whose insights have not been heeded in the creative collisions and, if heeded, leads to breakthroughs.

It is that voice which feels the sharpness of fear, and it is that voice to whom you must listen to intently and act on immediately. My aspiration for this plan is that it will support everyone at Southern Rural Water to feel welcome, to know that they have a voice, and that when they speak they'll be heard.



Cameron FitzGerald
Managing Director

Introduction – the case for change

Gender inequality is a society issue; it exists in schools, workplaces, neighbourhoods, the media and sport. Violence against women, including family violence and workplace sexual harassment, is driven by gender inequality and the attitudes, behaviours and stereotypes that support it.

Gender equality is when people of all genders have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities.

We acknowledge at this point in time women continue to earn less than men, are less likely to advance their careers as far as men, and accumulate less retirement or superannuation savings. At the same time, men have less access to family-friendly policies such as parental leave or flexible working arrangements than women.

The aim of gender equality in the workplace is to achieve broadly equal opportunities and outcomes for women and men, not necessarily outcomes that are exactly the same for all.

We recognise that improving gender equality is key to boosting Australia's productivity and innovation and has positive impacts on organisational culture and our communities.

At SRW our people are at the heart of everything we do. We value the contribution of a diverse workforce that offers new and different perspectives, powering greater collaboration and innovation. We acknowledge that it is our responsibility to create gender equality and inclusive workplaces where everyone can be their best self, regardless of gender.

Gender equality principles

Central to the development of this GEAP was a review of the principles in the Gender Equality Act 2020. This ensured our systems and actions reinforce those principles.

The principles will inform the re development of SRW's Values and Behaviours and will be a key element of our new Enterprise Agreement in 2023.

Our achievements to date

The development of this action plan provides an opportunity for SRW to acknowledge and reflect on the challenges and opportunities to achieve gender equality. Progress has been made on achieving gender balance to date:

- There has been a positive trend in female executive numbers, with women representing 50% of total executives, compared with 16% in 2016.
- The introduction of All Roles Flex has seen a significant uptake of formal flexible working arrangements with 82% agreement by respondents of the 2021 People Matter Survey reporting a positive culture at SRW in relation to employees who use flexible work practices (12% increase since 2016).
- There has been a significant improvement in workplace culture and behaviours, a significant reduction in employees reporting that they had experienced bullying and harassment from 40% in 2016, to 13% in 2021.

Our direction

We have about 165 employees working at sites and locations across southern Victoria. Along with the Act and Corporate Strategy, SRW has other obligations and commitments regarding gender equality.

SRW is guided by the annual Letter of Expectations from the Victorian Minister for Water outlining performance expectations. One of the current priority areas is that water corporations reflect the needs of our diverse communities and develop strategies and goals that will increase cultural diversity in the workforce and gender equity in executive leadership.

VicWater is SRW's industry body and assists water corporations to monitor the combined progress towards the targets set by the Victorian Government. For the past three years SRW has reported against these targets, and there has been a steady increase in women represented in positions across the organisation.

As part of SRW's obligations under the Act, the organisation must be adequately resourced to achieve all obligations within the timeframe set by the Commission. SRW acknowledges the importance of true cultural change at all levels, to achieve our Corporate Strategy and People Plan 2025 of a diverse workforce that offers new and different perspectives, powering greater collaboration and innovation, and creating an inclusive workforce where everyone can be their best self.

In 2022, SRW formed an internal Gender Equality Working Group to support SRW's long-term equity, diversity and inclusion aims as well as the development and ongoing implementation of the GEAP. The group is made up of employees who reflect the diverse people, perspectives and experiences from within SRW.

The GEAP is supported internally and enabled through the resources of the People, Safety and Culture Team. SRW is engaged with many employee networks internally and externally and will utilise these networks for support, including the VicWater Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee and the VicWater Human Resource Special Interest Group.

Our vision

Great value for customers and community through excellence in rural water management



Our people

Our people are at the heart of everything we do. It is our people who bring our aspirations for customer value and community value to life.



Health, Safety & Wellbeing

The health, safety and wellbeing of our people is our number one priority. A strong and valued workforce, in turn, provides excellent service and great value for our customers and communities.

We have zero tolerance for non-compliance to OHS legislation and work to eliminate or reduce risks for our people, customers and community. We promote good mental health and wellbeing, and strive to create a caring environment free from preventable injuries – safe for staff, contractors and visitors.



Culture

A culture of excellence means that we lead with a united purpose and inspire our people to achieve more than they thought possible.

We work across southern Victoria as “us” - always sharing knowledge and insights to enhance the whole of our operations. We value training, learning and acquiring new skills and knowledge. We value the contribution of a diverse workforce that offers new and different perspectives, powering greater collaboration and innovation. We create an inclusive workforce where everyone can be their best self.

Creating our plan

Understanding where we are at – Gender Equality Audit and Diversity and Inclusion Data

SRW's GEAP was consolidated through guidance provided by the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector (the Commission), following the development of the *Gender Equality Act 2020* (the Act). The Act requires defined entities to take positive action towards workplace gender equality and sets obligations to monitor and evaluate diversity and equity.

A Gender Workplace Audit was completed based on 30 June 2021 data and was submitted to the Commission in December 2021. The audit was underpinned by the seven Workplace Gender Equality Indicators set out by the Commission for Gender Equality and it provides the baseline data for this plan.

Workforce and employee experience data was collected from payroll and human resource systems and the 2021 People Matter Survey to identify critical gaps and assess the capacity for change to advance gender equality. The People Matter Survey included questions developed in consultation with the Commission to enable the Act reporting and action planning requirements. These results will form the baseline data for all future audits.

The audit process highlighted that SRW does not efficiently collect and report on data that defines the diversity and intersectionality of the organisation, particularly in the areas of gender identity, ethnicity, disability, religion and sexual orientation.

The People Matter Survey found that the diversity results, entered anonymously by employees, did not align with internal data collected during the onboarding process. Therefore, SRW does not have accurate information regarding employee diversity and cannot report on it correctly.

In line with legislative obligations, gender audit results were used as a key component of our formal consultation with employees, the SRW board members and unions. Other sources and data provided guidance as part of the development of our GEAP, including internal workforce and human resources data and anecdotal feedback from employees. We have also considered the gender equality principles outlined in section six of the Act and have used them to inform our GEAP.

Our Gender Equality Action Plan is underpinned by the Gender Equality Principles of the Gender Equality Act. What we are setting out to achieve will not only create safe and equal workplaces for the people of SRW but will contribute to Victorian society and will provide access for all genders to equal power, resources and opportunities and be treated with dignity, respect and fairness.

We acknowledge that special measures may be necessary to achieve gender equality.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality can be defined as an understanding of the ways that different forms of inequality or disadvantage can combine to amplify the impact on the individual or group.

SRW recognises there are ways in which different aspects of a person's identity, in addition to gender, can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation. These intersectional factors such as age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion and sexual orientation can amplify barriers to services and increase the risk of social isolation, and social and economic disadvantage. This is amplified for various cohorts within our community, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who face the intersection of colonisation, racism, and gendered violence, and face significantly higher rates of violence than non-Indigenous women.
- Women with a disability are twice as likely to experience violence from a current or previous partner than other women.
- LGBTQIA+ women who face a lack of inclusive services and can be excluded from resources offered to their cisgender and heterosexual counterparts.
- Older women are the fastest-growing group of homeless people in the country. There is a large gap between the superannuation savings of Australian men and women. As the current superannuation system is linked to paid work, it overwhelmingly disadvantages women who are more likely to move in and out of paid work to care for family members. Right now, many women are living their final years in poverty.

Applying an intersectional lens through the GEAP will bring SRW closer to achieving equity for all and ensuring the voices of all are heard. Listening, learning and understanding the views of all will help ensure SRW reflects on and considers the impact of discrimination, acts with respect, and bases actions on lived experience rather than defining all women as one catchall category.

SRW workforce and employee experience data

Through the systematic analysis of the audit data and employee and stakeholder consultation, the following areas were identified as a priority for SRW:

- increase equality in gender composition across the organisation;
- improve reporting with rich, transparent content and inspire action and accountability;
- shift gender norms, normalise respectful workplaces, provide flexible working for all employees; and
- see all leaders hold themselves and others to account for demonstrating gender-equitable and inclusive behaviour.

The following provides an overview of our results from the audit across the seven workplace gender equality indicators and highlights the insights that we have converted into our plan.

Workplace Gender Equality Indicator 1 – Gender composition at all levels of the organisation

Gender composition

	Full time	Part time	Casual	Total	Total as a percentage
Female	40	13	0	53	33%
Male	100	7	0	107	67%
Total	140	20	0	160	100%

Data as at 30 June 2021

Note: no employees identified as another gender.

Age and gender composition

Age	Male	Female	Total
Under 25	1%	1%	2%
25 - 34	8%	9%	17%
35 - 44	17%	9%	26%
45 - 54	21%	8%	29%
55 - 64	17%	4%	21%
65 +	3%	2%	5%

Note: Fifty-five percent of employees are more than 45 years old, with 2% between 15-24 years.

At SRW, women are underrepresented in middle management, STEM and field-based roles. This contributes to the gender pay gap and means that SRW may be missing out on the expertise and skills of women in these teams.

By collecting and reporting data on gender composition at all levels, SRW can see where we could benefit from greater gender diversity and take action to support women in these areas.

Workplace Gender Equality Indicator 2: Gender composition of governing bodies

Latest results from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) 2020-21 dataset show that only one in five boards have gender-balanced representation (18.7%) and more than one in five boards (22%) still have no women.

As boards, councils, committees of management and other governing bodies make important decisions about finances and strategy it's important that they have diverse voices at the table. The Victorian Government has made a commitment that at least 50 per cent of all new appointments to courts and paid government boards will be women. Consistently collecting and reporting this data will help ensure more gender-balanced boardrooms.

SRW's board has 63 per cent representation of women and is leading across the water sector and public sector.

Workplace Gender Equality Indicator 3: Gender pay equity

Currently, Australia's national gender pay gap is 13.8 per cent (WGEA 2022). The data shows women typically earn about \$25,000 per year less than men.

The pay gap is not a measure of whether women earn less than men for the same job – that is pay equality and is a legal requirement. It's an indicator of women's overall position in the workforce, representing how they and their work are valued. The gender pay gap is driven by several factors, including the unequal distribution of unpaid care work, higher rates of pay in male-dominated industries, and gender discrimination. By collecting and reporting pay data, organisations can see where pay gaps are largest and identify the underlying causes.

There is a clear correlation between SRW's gender pay gap in the technical and field-based workforce. These roles attract a higher variable pay such as overtime and a broad range of allowances that are not available to other roles within the classification. We also experience difficulty attracting women into our technical and field-based workforces.

As at 30 June 2021, SRW's gender pay gap across all levels was 13% and it is apparent that the majority of the highest paid roles within the organisation are occupied by men.

Base salary gap

Median base salary gap

Male median base salary	\$	87,949.32
Female median base salary	\$	84,113.77
Difference	\$	3,835.55
		4.36%

Median Total Salary Gap

Male median total salary	\$	109,761.70
Female median total salary	\$	94,350.10
Difference	\$	15,411.60
		14.04%

Workplace Gender Equality Indicator 4: Workplace sexual harassment

Sexual harassment can be a symptom of gender inequality and most often, but not always, affects women. Sexual harassment is against the law. It causes financial, psychological and physical harm to victim-survivors and has a significant economic cost to organisations and the community. Often victim-survivors don't make a formal report of their experience of sexual harassment. Barriers to reporting include fear of reprisal, lack of confidence in the reporting system, and a limited understanding of what sexual harassment is.

SRW has had no formal complaints of sexual harassment during the past 12 months; however we note that employees report through the People Matter Survey that they have experienced sexual harassment which indicates some employees do not feel confident reporting the matters.

We have a separate Bullying and Harassment Action Plan with key initiatives that support our GEAP.

Sexual harassment and discrimination

Percentage of survey respondents who agreed with the following statements:

I feel safe to challenge inappropriate behaviour at work.

Male: 63%

Female: 64%

My organisation takes steps to eliminate bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

Male: 56%

Female: 57%

My organisation encourages respectful workplace behaviours.

Male: 75%

Female: 71%

- 3% of employees reported that they had experienced sexual harassment; however these incidents were not reported formally to the organisation.
- 2% of employees reported that they had experienced discrimination.
- 36% of employees believe that SRW makes fair recruitment and promotion decisions, based on merit.
- 46% of our people believe that disability is not a barrier to success at SRW.
- 53% of our people believe SRW encourages respectful workplace behaviours and takes steps to eliminate bullying, harassment, and discrimination.
- 44% of employees believe SRW has a positive culture regarding employees who identify as LGBTIQ+; however 5% disagree.
- 58% of employees believe SRW supports diversity in the workplace, compared to 74% in comparator organisations, and 76% of employees believe that SRW acts on gender equality.

Workplace Gender Equality Indicator 5: Recruitment and promotion

Gender bias and gender stereotypes can influence recruitment, promotion and career progression practices. This means that women may not have access to the same career opportunities as men. Other forms of disadvantage and discrimination can also have an impact, limiting career opportunities for women from different backgrounds, such as women with disability and older women.

Data on recruitment and promotion outcomes can show where women's careers are stalling and help identify strategies to create more equal opportunities.

The audit found that employees recruited during the 2020-21 financial year reflected 53% men and 47% women – and this has continued in the first half of 2021-22. In the same period, 62% of men and 38% of women exited the business.

Employee turnover

	Male	Female
Recruitment	58%	42%
Exit	65%	35%

Note: Employees recruited during the audit period: 58% men and 42% women, while employees departing: 65% men and 35% women.

The People Matter Survey found that 71% of women and 44% of men believe that SRW makes fair recruitment and promotion decisions. There are 64% of women and 31% of men who believe they have an equal chance at promotion, yet there are a higher proportion of men in supervisor and manager roles.

Recruitment and promotion

Percentage of survey respondents who agreed with the following statements:

My organisation makes fair recruitment and promotion decisions, based on merit.

Male: 44%

Female: 71%

I feel I have an equal chance at promotion in my organisation.

Male: 31%

Female: 64%

Gender is not a barrier to success in my organisation.

Male: 63%

Female: 79%

Being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander is not a barrier to success in my organisation.

Male: 63%

Female: 71%

Cultural background is not a barrier to success in my organisation.

Male: 75%

Female: 71%

Sexual orientation is not a barrier to success in my organisation.

Male: 69%

Female: 57%

Disability is not a barrier to success in my organisation.

Male: 50%

Female: 57%

Age is not a barrier to success in my organisation.

Male: 63%

Female: 79%

Workplace Gender Equality Indicator 6: Leave and flexibility

Flexible working arrangements and leave entitlements (including parental leave) help Victorians of all genders balance paid work with other responsibilities. However, structural and cultural factors mean women are far more likely than men to work flexibly, especially by working part-time and taking longer parental leave. On average women do nearly twice as much unpaid work as men.

Since March 2019, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our workforce has predominantly been working from home, unless it has been unsafe for them to do so or they are part of our field workforce.

Parental leave

Gender composition of people who have taken parental leave in the past 12 months.

Male	Female
2	1

Gender composition of people who exited the organisation during parental leave.

Male	Female
0	0

Individual flexibility arrangements

Male	Female
26	32

Part-time arrangements

Across SRW, 13 females and seven males access part-time working arrangements. At the senior leadership level there are only two employees (both female) that access part time arrangements.

Parental leave

In the last 12 months, three employees took parental leave, with two men accessing leave and one women. Through our new Enterprise Agreement we would like to achieve greater access to parental leave for all genders.

Flexibility

The percentage of survey respondents who agreed with the following statements:

I am confident that if I requested a flexible work arrangement, it would be given due consideration.

Male: 94%

Female: 93%

My organisation supports employees with family or other caring responsibilities, regardless of gender.

Male: 81%

Female: 93%

- 33% of part-time employees are men.
- 68% of employees believe that using flexible work arrangements is not a barrier to success.
- 82% of employees report that they have the flexibility they need to manage work and non-work activities and responsibilities.
- 81% of employees believe SRW supports employees with family or other caring responsibilities regardless of gender, however only 61% of employees believe having caring responsibilities is not a barrier to success at SRW.

Support for family and caring responsibilities

Percentage of survey respondents who agreed with the following statements:

My organisation would support me if I needed to take family violence leave.

Male: 69%

Female: 86%

My organisation supports employees with family or other caring responsibilities, regardless of gender.

Male: 81%

Female: 93%

Workplace Gender Equality Indicator 7: Gender workforce segregation

Gendered workforce segregation reinforces gender inequality and widens the pay gap, as the average pay is lower in industries and occupations dominated by women.

Women make up a higher proportion of certain occupations and industries, while men are more represented in others. This gendered segregation is driven by gendered norms and stereotypes

about what work is appropriate for men and women, as well as structural factors including access to flexible working arrangements.

Our plan is to achieve greater gender diversity across customer service, operational, field and STEM functions.

Gender composition by classification

Band	Male	Female	Total
Band A	6%	6%	12%
Band B	27%	9%	36%
Band C	12%	7%	19%
Band D	8%	5%	13%
Band E	8%	4%	12%
Band F	3%	0%	3%
Executive	2.5%	2.5%	5%

Gender composition of ANZSCO code major groups

	Female	Male	Total
1 – Managers	13	16	29
2 – Professional	13	16	29
3 - Technician and trades workers	4	22	26
4 - Community and personal service workers	0	0	0
5 - Clerical and administrative workers	21	2	23
6 - Sales workers	0	0	0
7 - Machinery operators and drivers	2	51	53
8 - Labourers	0	0	0
Total	53	107	160

Consultation and engagement

Southern Rural Water's GEAP consultation began in August 2021 and continued through to submission of this GEAP in March 2022.

In developing this plan we conducted meaningful consultation within and outside our organisation, including the following activities:

- Engagement with union representatives
- Consultations with the Strategic Leadership
- Consultation with the Employee Consultative Committee (Participants: employee representatives who include union delegates and members)
- Employee drop in sessions (participants: all employees)
- Executive Leadership Team meetings
- Feedback on our gender equality action plan, was encouraged via an online anonymous survey
- All employee communication and engagement through regular updates in the SRW online newsletter
- Engagement with the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, defined entities and water sector partners
- Consultation with our SRW governing bodies, the People, Safety and Culture Committee and the Board.

The consultation included:

- Information on our history and progress to date on gender equality initiatives
- The *Gender Equality Act* and obligations
- The GEAP structure and requirements
- An overview of our current workforce and cultural data
- Results of the Gender Audit
- Our proposed approach to the GEAP.

At all engagements, employees were offered the opportunity to be more directly involved with developing the GEAP or provide feedback and ask questions.

Following an extensive and transparent engagement process, key stakeholders supported the proposed approach for this plan. Importantly, this process identified the need for ongoing engagement to refine specific activities and ways to achieve our GEAP's actions and outcomes.

The Plan

This is the SRW four-year Gender Equality Action Plan.

Key outcomes

Based on the audit results and gender equality principles, we have identified four key outcomes for SRW to address the seven workplace gender equality indicators (WGEIs).

Achieve and retain gender equality across all levels	Report rich, transparent content that inspires action	Normalise respectful workplaces and shift gender norms	All leaders to hold themselves and others to account for demonstrating gender equality and inclusive behaviour
WGEIs 1, 2, 5	WGEIs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	WGEIs 4, 6	WGEIs 1, 2, 6

Workplace Gender Equality Indicators

- 1 Gender composition at all levels of the organisation
- 2 Gender composition of governing bodies
- 3 Gender pay equity
- 4 Workplace sexual harassment
- 5 Recruitment and promotion
- 6 Leave and flexibility
- 7 Gender workforce segregation

Priority 1 - Achieve and retain gender equality across all levels

Strategy	Action	Timeline				Responsibility	Measure															
		2022	2023	2024	2025																	
Attract greater diversity in candidates through new Employee Value Proposition.	Establish specific targets for gender composition at all levels of the workforce and establish KPIs for business unit executives.	←————→				People Safety and Culture Committee Executive	<p>Increased number of applicants from diverse backgrounds.</p> <p>Successful hiring for non-gender typical roles, particularly Asset Futures, Service Delivery and Customer Service roles.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Current - 2022</th> <th>2026</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Overall women at SRW</td> <td>33%</td> <td>>40%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Executive Leadership group</td> <td>50%</td> <td>50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>STEM</td> <td>26%</td> <td>>40%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Field</td> <td>12%</td> <td>>30%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Current - 2022	2026	Overall women at SRW	33%	>40%	Executive Leadership group	50%	50%	STEM	26%	>40%	Field	12%	>30%
	Current - 2022	2026																				
Overall women at SRW	33%	>40%																				
Executive Leadership group	50%	50%																				
STEM	26%	>40%																				
Field	12%	>30%																				
Enhance recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace.	Create a recruitment policy and supporting Corporate Instruction to support GEAP actions and initiatives.	←→																				
	Report gender composition findings and targets across SRW.	←————→				People Safety and Culture Team																
	Create opportunities to strengthen gender representation in select occupations (e.g. STEM and Service Delivery) such as traineeships and graduate positions. Partner with schools and universities.	←————→				People Safety and Culture Team Executive																
	Review language in position descriptions, key selection criteria: skills required, expectations, deliverables.	←————→				People Safety and Culture Team																
	Review language, graphics and images for job advertisements and social media.	←————→				People Safety and Culture Team Communications and Engagement Team																
	Educate managers on diverse shortlisting and all recruitment panels to be gender-balanced.	←→				People Safety and Culture Team																
Attract greater diversity in candidates through	Identify and implement advancement strategies, such as a review of our current practices, promoting	←→				People Safety and Culture Team	Internal teams/committees have no more than 60 percent of members represented by a single gender.															

Priority 1 - Achieve and retain gender equality across all levels							
Strategy	Action	Timeline				Responsibility	Measure
		2022	2023	2024	2025		
improved internal recruitment processes.	secondment opportunities, mentoring, learning and development. Ensure all internal committees and work teams (such as Health, Safety and Environment, Employee Consultative Committee, Incident Management Teams) have no more than 60 percent of members represented by a single gender.						Increase consistency of gender response in People Matter Survey results year on year for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My organisation makes fair recruitment and promotion decisions, based on merit (36% in 2021) • Gender is not a barrier to success at SRW (59% in 2021) • Disability is not a barrier to success at SRW (46% in 2021) • I feel I have an equal chance at promotion at SRW (32% in 2021)
	Include transparent process for secondment and acting opportunities within a new recruitment policy and guidelines.	←→				People Safety and Culture Team	
	Create an internal awareness campaign to create awareness of gendered segregation of occupations and the impact gender stereotypes can have on decisions about a role.	←→				People Safety and Culture Team Communications and Engagement Team	
	Celebrate internal promotions at SRW.	←→				PSC Team C&E Team	
Equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value across all levels of the workforce, irrespective of gender	Enterprise Bargaining Agreement classification review to ensure transparency of equal pay for equal or comparable value across all levels of the workforce.	←→				People Safety and Culture Team Finance Team	Report on gender pay targets to the organisation in July 2022.
	Conduct deep analysis of pay data and develop targets and strategies to address gender pay gaps.	←→				Executive	
	Conduct annual gender pay gap audits and report to the organisation.	←→				People Safety and Culture Team Finance Team	

Priority 1 - Achieve and retain gender equality across all levels							
Strategy	Action	Timeline				Responsibility	Measure
		2022	2023	2024	2025		
<p>Promote and support flexibility for everyone.</p> <p>Create a workplace that supports employees to balance work and life responsibilities.</p>	<p>New Enterprise Agreement updated clauses and supported by SRW policies.</p>	←→				Executive & Strategic Leadership Team	<p>Maintain People Matter Survey results regarding leave and flexibility. My organisation supports employees with family or other caring responsibilities, regardless of gender (male 81%, female 93%).</p>
<p>Flexible working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities</p>	<p>Leadership: employees look to senior leaders and managers as role models for flexible work.</p> <p>Leaders to promote flexibility to strengthen attraction and retention initiatives at senior positions.</p> <p>Promote caring responsibilities and flexibility at all levels.</p> <p>Leaders to keep in touch with employees on extended leave, including parental leave of employment opportunities.</p>	←→				Executive & Strategic Leadership Team	<p>Flexible work is embraced and is business as usual as a way to support work and caring responsibilities, increase employee wellbeing and career opportunities, and improve SRW's overall productivity.</p> <p>Achieve a 30% increase in male part-time and senior leadership team employees.</p> <p>Increase in People Matter Survey results year on year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a positive culture within my organisation in relation to employees who use flexible work arrangements (65% in 2021). • Using flexible work arrangements is not a barrier to success at SRW (68% in 2021).
	<p>Review job design in field roles and senior leadership team</p> <p>Promote part-time, job share and flexible work.</p>	←→				Executive & Strategic Leadership Team	

Priority 1 - Achieve and retain gender equality across all levels							
Strategy	Action	Timeline				Responsibility	Measure
		2022	2023	2024	2025		
	Provide additional flexibility for parents and grandparents to care for school-aged children and other caring responsibilities.	←————→				Executive & Strategic Leadership Team	
	Support employees transitioning to retirement through flexible work options.	←————→				Executive & Strategic Leadership Team	

Priority 2 – Report rich, transparent content that inspires action

Strategy	Action	Timeline				Responsibility	Measure
		2022	2023	2024	2025		
Ensure employee diversity and intersectionality information is correctly captured and reported on.	Improve on-boarding documentation to reflect questions from People Matter Survey Intersectionality Report and encourage existing employees to update their information.	←→				People Safety and Culture Team Finance	Increased number of applicants from diverse backgrounds. Successful hiring for non-gender typical roles.
	Report organisation wide annually on all diversity and inclusion data.	←→	←→	←→	←→	People Safety and Culture Team Finance	Annual reporting
Equal remuneration for work of equal comparable value across all levels of the workforce, irrespective of gender.	Create a broader range of reporting, including intersectionality representation including gender, Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and other attributes.	←→	←→	←→	←→	People Safety and Culture Team Finance	Annual reporting
	Create specific categories within HR information system that directly align with the Victorian Gender Equality Commission's Workplace Gender Audit.	←→				People Safety and Culture Team Finance	
Guarantee that sexual harassment reporting processes are completed to ensure an accurate understanding of the workplace environment	Develop confidential and anonymous reporting for sexual harassment and bullying incidents.	←→				People Safety and Culture Team	Internal sexual harassment reporting is consistent with People Matter Survey results for: zero employee experience sexual harassment behaviours at work (3% in 2021)
	Sexual harassment complaints will be reported to the SRW Health, Safety and Environment Committee and the SRW People, Safety and Culture Board Committee.	←→	←→	←→	←→	People Safety and Culture Team	

Priority 3 - Normalise respectful workplaces and shift gender norms

Strategy	Action	Timeline				Responsibility	Measure
		2022	2023	2024	2025		
SRW's values and behaviours define what are most important to SRW and act as a compass to guide employees in everything that they do.	<p>Roll out the new values and behaviours that clearly define the standards of behaviour expected of employees at all levels of the organisation.</p> <p>Provide everyone with an opportunity to share ideas and collaborate, demonstrating active listening and respectful conversations.</p> <p>Encourage employees to voice their concerns about discrimination, bullying, harassment including sexual harassment or other inappropriate behaviour and to be heard without fear of negative consequences.</p>	↔				Strategic Leadership Team	<p>SRW new values and behaviours are implemented across the organisation.</p> <p>Increase in People Matter results year on year for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My organisation uses inclusive and respectful images and language (69% in 2021) • I feel culturally safe at work (65% in 2021) • I feel safe to challenge inappropriate behaviour at work (56% in 2021) • There is a positive culture surrounding different sexes/genders (62% in 2021) • There is a positive culture surrounding disability (45% in 2021) • There is a positive culture surrounding Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islanders (60% in 2021) • There is a positive culture surrounding those who identify as LGBTIQ+ (44% in 2021)

Priority 3 - Normalise respectful workplaces and shift gender norms							
Strategy	Action	Timeline				Responsibility	Measure
		2022	2023	2024	2025		
SRW's values and behaviours define what is most important to SRW and act as a compass to guide employees in everything that they do.	Facilitate organisation-wide training to ensure employees know that sexual harassment is unlawful and harmful, to raise awareness of what constitutes sexual harassment, and what to do if it happens to you or you witness it happening to someone else – as well as management responsibilities when a complaint is received.					People Safety and Culture Team	<p>Elimination of gender-based bullying, harassment and assault in the workplace. A zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment.</p> <p>Increase in People Matter Survey results year on year for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My organisation encourages respectful workplace behaviours (67% in 2021) • My organisation takes steps to eliminate bullying, harassment, and discrimination (53% in 2021) • I feel safe to challenge inappropriate behaviour at work (53% in 2021)
Educate our employees on gender and intersectional diversity.	Share a collection of internal communications throughout each year to promote diversity across gender, Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation, and other attributes.					People Safety and Culture Team Communications and Engagement Team	<p>Decrease in People Matter Survey results year on year for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees who responded they were unsure/not aware if there was a positive culture within SRW in relation to employees who identify as LGBTIQ+ (51% in 2021)
	Diversity and intersectional mandatory training will be conducted for all employees.					People Safety and Culture Team	
	SRW will commemorate and celebrate cultural and awareness events.					People Safety and Culture Team	

Priority 3 - Normalise respectful workplaces and shift gender norms							
Strategy	Action	Timeline				Responsibility	Measure
		2022	2023	2024	2025		
						Communications and Engagement Team	
Ensure all employees have access to conditions of employment that support their carer responsibilities.	Promote all genders to access parental leave entitlements and take carers leave.					People Safety and Culture Team	Increase the number of employees in part-time roles across genders and business units to 40%.
Availability and utilisation of terms and conditions relating to family violence leave, flexible working arrangements and working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities	Provide new parents with a flexible, supporting and enabling environment in line with the Australian Breastfeeding Strategy – regardless of gender.					Communications and Engagement Team	
	Ensure supervisors and managers take responsibility for keeping in touch with employees on long periods of leave.					Strategic Leadership Team	
	Promote recruitment opportunities for everyone including employees on leave.					Strategic Leadership Team	
	Talk to part-time employees about options to increase hours using a combination of flexible work arrangements.					Strategic Leadership Team	
Ensure all employees know how to handle conversations about sexual harassment and incident reporting.	Sexual harassment and bystander training for all current employees and compulsory training for all new employees – with a zero-tolerance message in all training and communications.					People Safety and Culture Team	Increase in People Matter Survey results year on year for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> My organisation encourages respectful workplace behaviours (67% in 2021)
	Handling challenging and confidential sexual harassment conversations training for all					People Safety and Culture Team	

Priority 3 - Normalise respectful workplaces and shift gender norms							
Strategy	Action	Timeline				Responsibility	Measure
		2022	2023	2024	2025		
Build a culture where employees report family violence issues and are supported.	existing employees and compulsory training for all new employees.						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My organisation takes steps to eliminate bullying, harassment and discrimination (53% in 2021) I feel safe to challenge inappropriate behaviour at work (53% in 2021) <p>100% of employees complete training</p> <p>Internal sexual harassment reports reflect the People Matter Survey results.</p> <p>Decrease in People Matter Survey results year on year for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experienced sexual harassment (3% in 2021)
	Review complaint procedure and clearly articulate information about complaints processes (in policy and communication material) and provide multiple access points.					People Safety and Culture Team	
	Management to report all formal and informal incidents and complaints. Management to report on progress of action plan. Management to report key data from People Matter and Culture surveys.					People Safety and Culture Team	
Strategy	Action	Timeline				Responsibility	Measure
Create an environment where any employee member can access the support required if experiencing family	Continue training for managers, People, Safety and Culture team and other key employees on how to support and respond to an employee experiencing family violence.					Strategic Leadership Team	<p>Increase in People Matter Survey results year on year for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> My organisation would support me if I needed to take family violence leave
	Build a culture where employees report family violence issues and are supported.					Strategic Leadership Team	

Priority 3 - Normalise respectful workplaces and shift gender norms							
Strategy	Action	Timeline				Responsibility	Measure
		2022	2023	2024	2025		
violence, without fear of discrimination. Availability and utilisation of terms and conditions relating to family violence leave, flexible working arrangements and working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities	Create an environment where any employee can access the support required if experiencing family violence.						(Male: 69% and Female: 86%) • My organisation supports employees with family or other caring responsibilities, regardless of gender (Male: 81% and Female: 93%)
	Ensure there is a clear process to reallocate personal or sick leave to family violence leave if required.					People Safety and Culture Team	

Priority 4 – Courageous leadership							
All leaders to hold themselves and others to account for demonstrating gender equality and inclusive behaviour							
Strategy	Action	Timeline				Responsibility	Measure
		2022	2023	2024	2025		
<p>Leadership is inextricably linked with culture. The respectful and ethical tone of a workplace must start at the top.</p> <p>Positive respectful leaders reinforce a respectful culture and demonstrate the organisation’s commitment to respectful workplaces.</p> <p>Promote SRW as an inclusive organisation that supports and values diversity both internally and to our customers and community</p>	<p>Board and executive to routinely lead conversations with employees on issues relating to gender equality and to take an equitable approach to mentoring other colleagues.</p>	←————→				Executive Board	<p>Board attendance at SRW employee events leading conversations on gender equality.</p> <p>Increase in People Matter Survey results year on year for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior leaders model SRW’s values (47% in 2021) • Senior leaders actively support diversity and inclusion in the workplace (59% in 2021) • Gender is not a barrier to success at SRW (59% in 2021) • Age is not a barrier to success at SRW (61% in 2021) • My organisation encourages respectful workplace behaviours (67% in 2021) • SRW is recognised throughout the community as a welcoming and culturally diverse organisation. • Increased numbers of applicants from diverse backgrounds.
	<p>All people leaders model the new SRW values and behaviours, and mentoring and support is provided to managers and supervisors.</p> <p>Ensure supervisors and managers act in a timely manner on unreasonable behaviour they see or become aware of.</p>	←————→				Executive Board	

Priority 4 – Courageous leadership All leaders to hold themselves and others to account for demonstrating gender equality and inclusive behaviour							
Strategy	Action	Timeline				Responsibility	Measure
		2022	2023	2024	2025		
Promote SRW as an inclusive organisation that supports and values diversity.	Board and executive lead International Women’s Day events.	←→				Board Executive Strategic Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual attendance at events.
	Participation in relevant networks and forums. Supporting women in leadership or emerging leader roles through leadership courses.	←→				Executive	
Advance gender equality as a shared responsibility across the broader community	Customer Consultative Committee review.	←→				Executive Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SRW is recognised throughout the community as a welcoming and culturally diverse organisation. Increased numbers of customers from diverse backgrounds on consultative committees. The board continues to advocate for equal gender representation on the SRW board, and across the water sector.

How we will achieve our plan - leadership and resourcing

Board and executive team

The SRW Executive Team and Board were actively involved in the development of the GEAP and are committed to advancing gender equality within SRW and the broader water industry.

The Board is also committed to building its understanding of gender equality and intersectionality, and support training and upskilling in this area.

Governance structure

The People, Safety and Culture team is responsible for delivering the People Plan 2025 and the delivery of our diversity and inclusion initiatives that come under that plan. We recognise that advancing gender equality within SRW and the broader water sector requires a collaborative approach and a strong foundation in the form of governance structures and transparent reporting.

Gender equality working group

A representative from each business functional area will be a key influencer who will progress gender equality through individual and collective action, and implement the GEAP across the organisation.

This cross-functional working group will continually review and improve our policies, procedures, systems and processes to promote gender equality. We will enhance the way we work at SRW by creating an inclusive workplace for everyone.

Gender equality champions

Southern Rural Water actively promotes and encourages all employees to volunteer to be gender equality champions.

Gender equality champions are key influencers and advocates who will promote gender equality and actively support and contribute to continuous improvements in our workplace.

Measuring progress

Monitoring our strategies designed to promote and advance gender equality will enable SRW to know we are on the right track to achieve its vision and provide the flexibility to respond rapidly to changing environments, emerging research and best practice.

Governance structures have been established to ensure regular monitoring of implementation against milestones. Progress will be published in the Annual Report, and information will be shared with all employees. In accordance with our legislative obligations under the Act, we will also report progress after two years to the Commission.

