Victorian Fisheries AUTHORITY

GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2021 -2025

Progress Report

1 July 2023 – 30 June 2025

We're hooked on SAFETY

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Aboriginal acknowledgement

The Victorian Fisheries Authority proudly acknowledges Victoria's Aboriginal community and their rich culture and pays respect to their Elders past, present and future.

We acknowledge Aboriginal people as Australia's first peoples, and as the custodians of the land on which we work and live.

We recognise the strength of Aboriginal people, Traditional Owners and their communities, and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people to Victorian life, through their daily work, their application of Aboriginal knowledge and practice, and at key events; we recognise how this enriches us all.

We recognise that Aboriginal cultures and communities are diverse and should be celebrated.

We acknowledge that the land and water is of spiritual, cultural and economic importance to Aboriginal people. We embrace the spirit of reconciliation, guaranteeing equality of outcomes and ensuring an equal voice.

As part of the Victorian Government, we have distinct legislative obligations to Victorian Traditional Owner groups related to cultural and natural heritage, that are paramount in our responsibilities in managing Victoria's resources in partnership with Traditional Owners.

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Foreword by the VFA CEO

VFA's *Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) 2021 – 2025* helps us achieve our vision for gender equality and in the process achieve greater innovation, a broader perspective, and better reflect the Victorian community.

This document shares the progress we have made over the second two years of the GEAP. 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2025. The template progress report was reviewed and approved for submission in April 2026, providing truthful and accurate information on the VFA's progress. The VFA completed all relevant gender impact assessments under the Gender Equality Act 2020.

While undergoing significant change during the reporting period, the VFA has continued to implement the strategies of the GEAP 2021 – 2025.

The Victorian Government endorsed a range of budget initiatives which necessitated reprioritisation of existing activities and resources across the Victorian Public Service (VPS), and as a result the VFA undertook a restructure. The timing of this, including the planning and consultation with employees took over six months towards the end of the reporting period with the implementation post the reporting period. Organisation resources were focused on delivering the change while maintaining business as usual activities for a significant part of the reporting period.

In this context, the VFA continued to implement strategies to progress towards gender equality and made progress on some of the workplace gender equality indicators. While the overall progress is not linear and at times felt like it has stalled, the VFA is still moving forwards to reach our gender equity goals with long term learning and adaptation.

While numeric indicator progress may not have occurred for some of the seven gender indicators, we are building a strong foundation of continuous learning and applying those learnings to achieve greater gender equity.

We remain committed to achieving our vision for gender equality.



Travis Dowling
Chief Executive Officer

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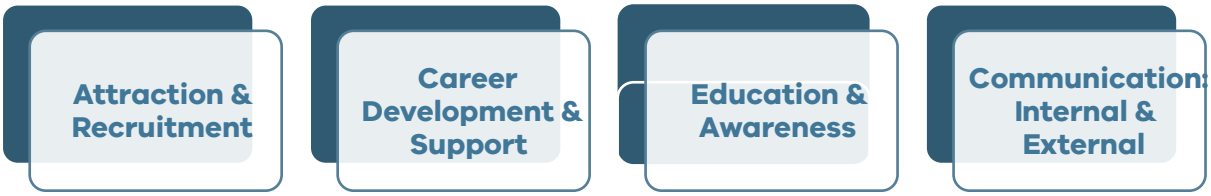
Vision for Gender Equality

Our vision for gender equality

Our vision for gender equality is to have a workplace with:

- greater mix of diversity to achieve a better dynamic, greater innovation, a broader perspective, and to reflect the Victorian community;
- equal opportunities for all in recruitment, flexibility, career development and training, equitable pay and conditions; and
- more women in leadership positions (including executives) with clear pathways to leadership.

In our Gender Equality Action Plan 2021 – 2025 (GEAP) we committed to making reasonable and material progress for each of the seven gender equality indicators as per the Gender Equality Act 2020 to achieve greater gender equality. We identified four focus areas to guide the implementation of gender equality actions over the four years of the plan.



The following sections in this document present the information provided in the VFA's progress template report to the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, which is also available on the VFA website. It reflects progress as shown in the required sections of the Commission's reporting template.

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1. Gender Impact Assessments (GIAs)

For GIAs done on policies, programs, and services that have a direct and significant impact on the public the VFA is unable to report two of its six completed GIAs undertaken during the reporting period as they are 'Cabinet in Confidence'.

Policy, program or service	Purpose and gendered impacts	Actions taken resulting from GIA	Intersectionality and targeted actions
1. **VFA Events Program 2025–2026** Review of Program.	Annual VFA events funded through recreational fishing licence trust and base funding, reaching more than 20,000 participants. The GIA identified that fishing and event participation have traditionally been male-dominated, and that people of different genders, abilities, ages and cultural backgrounds may face different barriers to attending, feeling welcome and participating.	Actions included: continuing all-abilities fishing activities, supporting multicultural engagement through the Zinda Festival, working with WIRFaB leaders, making all events more inclusive through event planning checklists, using inclusive imagery in communications, and planning a further Inclusive Culture Program for fishing and boating clubs.	Intersectionality was considered through partnerships with disability and multicultural organisations, inclusive event design, Indigenous-themed activities, multilingual staff where possible, and imagery showing people of different genders, cultural backgrounds, abilities and other diverse attributes.
2. **Recreational Fishing Small Grants Program** Review of Program.	Small grants of up to $5,000 support projects that benefit public recreational fishing in Victoria. The GIA identified that grants are often accessed by angling clubs and fishing groups that are more likely to be male-dominated, which may unintentionally prioritise projects designed around men's needs and discourage women, gender-diverse people, CaLD communities and people with disability.	Actions included: promoting successful applications from diverse groups, distributing targeted information through CaLD networks, increasing social media portrayal of diverse grant-funded events, including all-abilities access and gendered impact in assessment criteria, and planning assessor information sessions on gender equity, unconscious bias and inclusive assessment.	Intersectionality was considered by recognising application barriers such as English-language forms, written application requirements, stereotypes about fishing participation and reduced confidence among marginalised groups. A targeted flyer was developed to promote support and increase applications from CaLD and other under-represented groups.

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Policy, program or service	Purpose and gendered impacts	Actions taken resulting from GIA	Intersectionality and targeted actions
3. VFA External Communications Review of Service.	The service communicates with the public through social media, email, media lists and media releases, reaching large public audiences. The GIA identified that VFA social media followers are mostly men, and that communications can either reinforce or reduce barriers by the people, stories and images they feature.	Actions included: depicting Victorians of different genders, abilities, ages, ethnicities and mobility levels in communications, and moderating social media content that features staff or contains offensive language to support respectful and safe engagement.	Intersectionality was considered by recognising that gender, race, culture, age and physical ability should not be barriers to fishing and boating. Targeted actions include selecting diverse stories and images for social media, featuring a woman angler of mixed heritage on the 2026 Recreational Fishing Guide cover, and including Indigenous Australians, older and younger anglers, people with limited mobility and people from different cultural backgrounds in posts.
4. Fisheries Officers Recruitment Campaign New program	Campaign aims to recruit Fisheries Officers for metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, with a focus on increasing applications from women and CaLD communities. The GIA identified potential barriers including limited awareness of VFA roles, language used in advertisements and position descriptions, the application process, physical aspects of the role,	Actions included applying special measures for women applicants in northern Victorian vacancies and Chinese and Vietnamese applicants for metropolitan vacancies; increasing visibility of current staff; sharing role information through partner organisations and community networks; attending community events; making recruitment webpages more accessible and translated; simplifying recruitment	Intersectionality was considered through special measures and targeted approaches for women and Chinese and Vietnamese communities. Actions specifically address barriers by using community outreach, translated and simplified information, accessible webpages and applicant support sessions.

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Policy, program or service	Purpose and gendered impacts	Actions taken resulting from GIA	Intersectionality and targeted actions
	and cultural perceptions of Fisheries Officer work.	information; targeted marketing; engaging WIRFaB; and offering 'how to apply for a government job' sessions. Recruitment was paused due to restructure.	

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2. Workplace Gender Equality Indicators

Overview

For each of the seven gender equality indicators, section 2 of this report provides information on:

- Progress made and progress data

- Factors contributing or limiting progress such as:
  a. the size of the organisation, including the number of employees
  b. the nature and circumstances of the organisation, including any barriers to making progress
  c. requirements that apply to the organisation under any other Act, including an Act of the Commonwealth
  d. the organisation's resources
  e. the organisation's operational priorities and competing operational obligations
  f. the practicability and cost to the organisation of making progress; and
  g. genuine attempts made by the organisation to make progress

- Strategies implemented that contributed to or aligned with each indicator. The numbering in the list of strategies refers to the numbering used in the VFA's GEAP 2021-2025.

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Workplace Gender Equality Indicator 1

Gender composition of all levels of the workforce

Progress made: No

- Workforce composition has not improved from 2023 to 2025, with women decreasing slightly from 36.9% to 35.9%, although this remains marginally better than the 2021 baseline of 35%.
- Recruitment is showing some positive signs, with more women than men hired in both reporting periods; however, more women are also exiting, so further analysis is needed to understand retention issues.
- Part-time work among women has increased, rising from 25% to 29%, and part-time women are represented across more reporting levels than part-time men. This may point to possible implications for pay equity and career progression.
- Senior leadership representation has declined, with no women senior leaders in 2025. While there has been progress at levels two and three below the CEO, the absence of women at executive level affects decision-making diversity and contributes to the gender pay gap.
- Younger women are more strongly represented, particularly among employees under 34, suggesting the VFA is attracting younger women. Further work is needed to ensure women have clear development pathways and support to build long-term careers.

Overall, the above points to mixed progress: recruitment and early-career attraction are positive, but this is offset by women's exits, limited senior leadership representation, and potential barriers to progression.

Fig. 1: All staff 2025

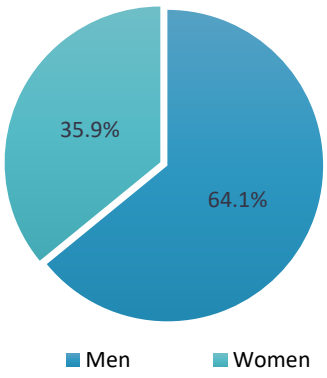
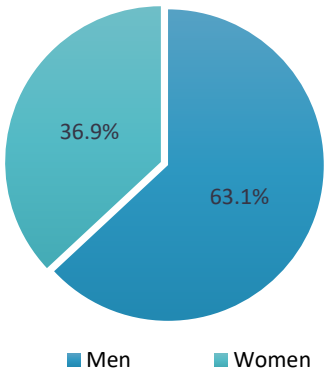


Fig. 2: All staff 2023



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Factors contributing to or limiting progress

- (b) The Victorian Government endorsed a range of budget initiatives which necessitated reprioritisation of existing activities and resources across the VPS. For the VFA this resulted in a restructure. The timing of this, including the planning and consultation with employees took over six months towards the end of the reporting period. A significant recruitment campaign using special measures was put on hold due to the reprioritisation and restructure.
- (d) Organisation resources, particularly Management and People and Culture were focused on preparing for and delivering the change while maintaining business as usual activities.
- (g)Genuine attempts have been made by the VFA to make progress through the implementation of strategies listed in column S and through the continued application of policies and processes that were put in place in the 21-23 period that laid a foundation for ongoing progress.

Strategies implemented that contributed to or aligned with the indicator

Strategies implemented in 2023-2025:

1.1 Identify and develop talent within the VFA – Actions: Develop a Talent Strategy and implement that supports gender, diversity and inclusion, and considers intersectionality.

While a pilot program was trialled in 2021-2023 period this strategy was put on hold due to limited resources.

1.5 Continue to learn about the barriers to achieving greater gender composition – Action: Work with portfolio department systems to ensure intersectional data is collected in HR System.

Through regular communication employees were encouraged to update diversity information in the HR System. The number of employees providing some level of diversity data increased from 14% to 44%.

Strategies implemented in 2021-2023 that have ongoing impact

1.2 Ensure our recruitment attracts and promotes diversity – Actions: Update our VFA branding and supporting documentation to ensure it is inclusive through consultation

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with intersectional groups. In recruitment advertisements and position descriptions, be open and transparent to all in our aspirations to become more diverse

1.3 Improve gender balance at senior management level (SES, Principal Scientists, STS, and VPS6) – Action: Actively recruit for gender balance

1.4 Promote diversity into VPS5 and above roles – Action: In addition to internal candidate pool, explore opportunities for more lateral and external candidates for roles at VPS5 and above, which includes identifying opportunities for flexible working arrangements (job sharing, part-time etc)

1.5 Continue to learn about the barriers to achieving greater gender composition – Action: Gather and analyse information on barriers to achieving gender composition, using tools such as the People Matter Survey, exit interviews when they occur, Gender Working Group feedback.

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Workplace Gender Equality Indicator 2

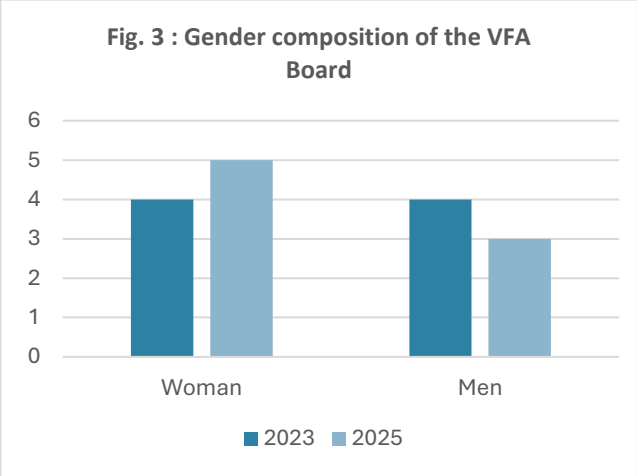
Gender composition of governing bodies

Progress made: YES

Women's representation on the VFA Board has increased. Five of the eight Board Directors are women. From 2017 to 2024, the Board had an even balance of women and men.

The VFA does not manage Board recruitment. This is handled by the portfolio department, and Board Directors are appointed by the Minister for Outdoor Recreation either directly or through a competitive process.

The VFA does not currently collect diversity information about Board Directors. One Director shared that he is a Trawlwulwuy man from Tebrakunna country. The VFA will work with the portfolio department to look at how diversity information can be collected during Board recruitment, helping the VFA better understand the Board's diversity.



Factors contributing to or limiting progress

- (C) The Board directors are appointed by the Minister for Outdoor Recreation and can either be appointed directly or appointed through a competitive process. The recruitment process for Board directors is undertaken outside of the VFA and managed by its portfolio department on behalf of the Minister.
- (g) The VFA has made genuine attempts to provide support to the Minister and portfolio department in Board recruitment.

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Strategies implemented that contributed to or aligned with the indicator

Strategies implemented in 2021 – 2023 that have ongoing impact

2.1 Continue to support the Minister and Board Chair to achieve greater intersectional diversity – Action: continue to ensure diversity is a focus for those involved in advertising and recruiting for Board directors.

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Workplace Gender Equality Indicator 3

Equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value across all levels of the workforce, irrespective of gender

Progress made: No

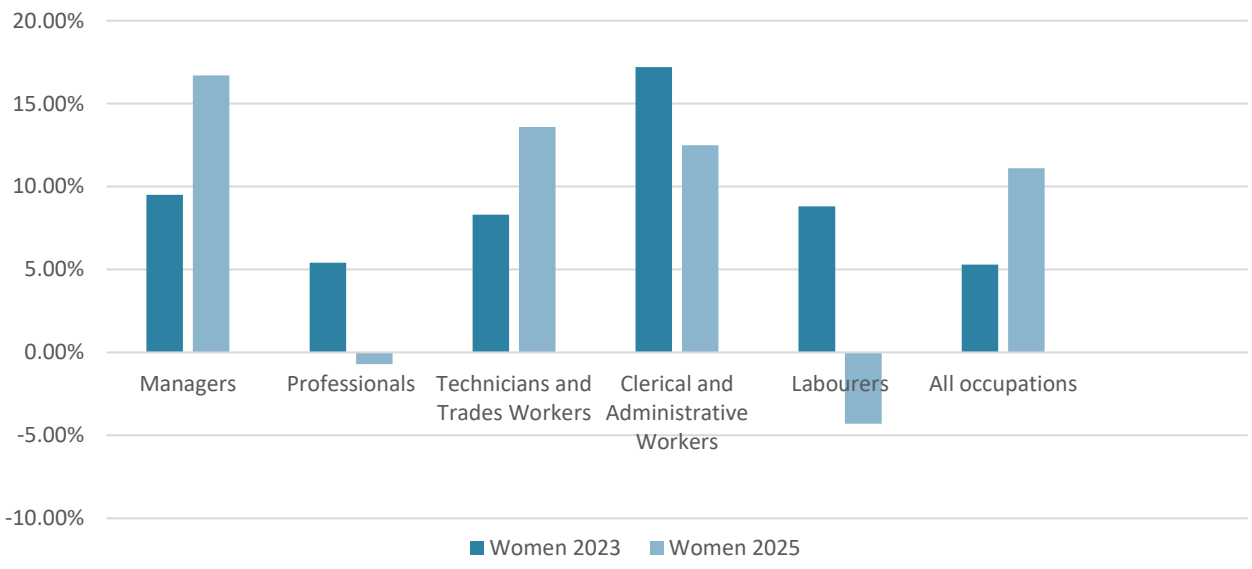
- Since 2021 overall mean total remuneration pay gap has improved from (12.6% to 11.1%).

  However, the data indicates that there has been an increase in the total remuneration pay gap between the two reporting periods 2023 to 2025 (5.3% to 11.1%).

- The VFA has employees in 5 occupation groups: Managers, Professionals, Technicians and Trade Workers, Clerical and Administrative Workers and Labourers.
  - The mean total remuneration gender pay gap decreased for women in three of the groups: Professional, Clerical and Administrative Workers and Labourers.
  - In the other two groups Managers and Technicians and Trade Workers the pay gap widened, particularly for Managers.

  Further and continued analysis is needed for areas where the uptake of overtime, higher duties, shift allowances, duty officer and other allowances differ for men and women.

Fig. 4: Gender pay gap total remuneration by occupation group



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- There was no pay gap calculation for the mean total remuneration for senior leaders for 2025 as there were no women classified as senior leaders. Having no women senior leaders impacts also on the overall pay gap of the VFA.
- There has been some progress in closing the pay gap over the life of the GEAP 2021-2025 for overall measures.

Mean base salary pay gap

2021 (8.6%) to 2023 (5.7%) to 2025 (6.7%)

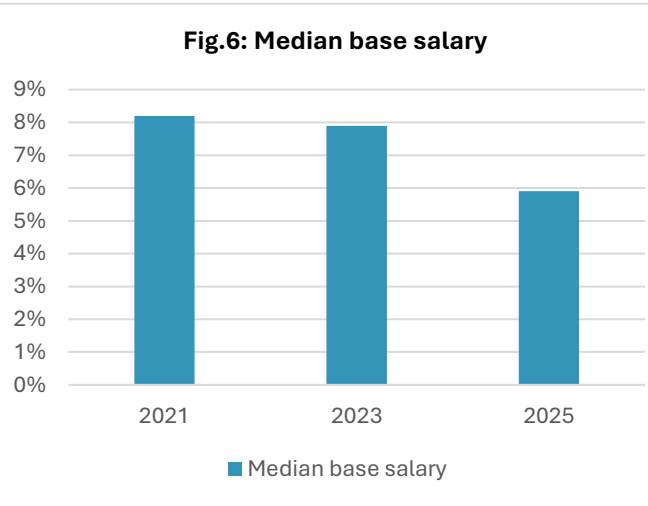
Fig.5: Mean base salary



Median base salary pay gap

2021 (8.2%) to 2023 (7.9%) to 2025 (5.9%)

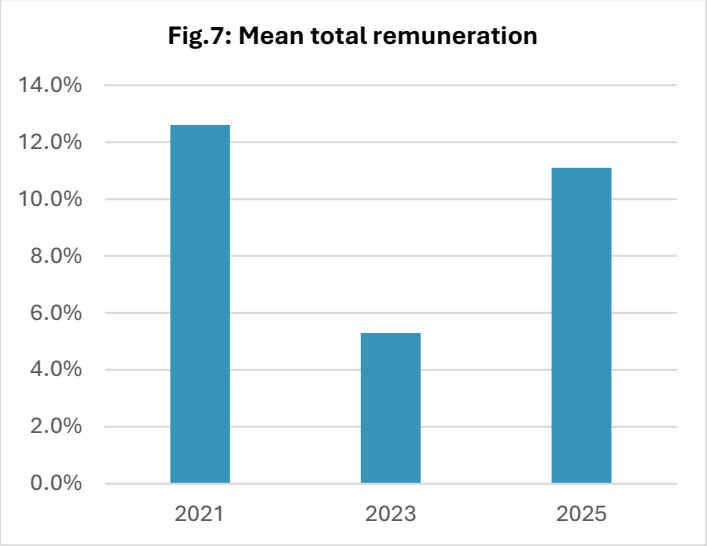
Fig.6: Median base salary



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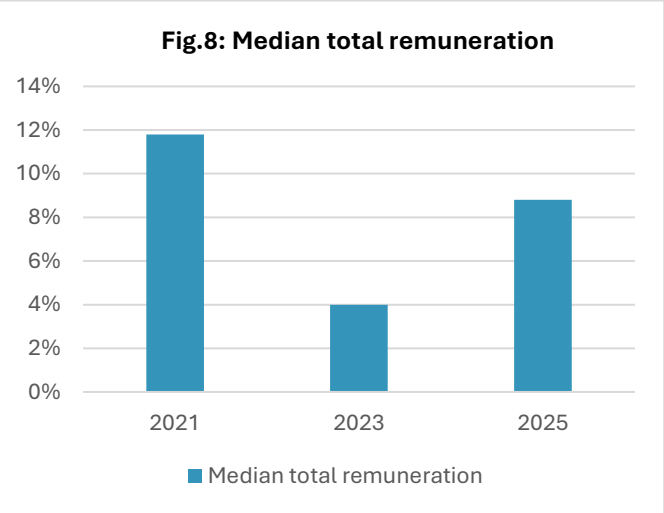
Mean total remuneration

2021 (12.6%) to 2023 (5.3%) to 2025 (11.1%)



Median total remuneration pay gap

2021(11.8%) to 2023 (4.0%) to 2025 (8.8%)



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Factors contributing to or limiting progress

- (a) The VFA is a relatively small to medium organisation with some occupation groups consisting of a variety of roles that may differ significantly and may also be different VPS levels.

  There is also the possibility of some reporting levels (to the CEO) having different levels of responsibility. For example, an Executive (-1) might have employees who are VPS7s and VPS6s but are classified as (-2).

- (b) The nature and circumstances of the VFA is that field staff including, for example, hatchery employees and Fisheries Officers are predominantly men. Fisheries Officers work to a roster with shift work, weekend work etc that attracts allowances and overtime. Hatchery workers including drivers may need to work outside ordinary hours for fish production and delivery.
- (g) The VFA has made genuine attempts to reduce the pay gap over the four years of the GEAP. The absence of women in senior leadership roles and roles at VPS7 level over 2023-2025 has impacted on the pay gap.

Strategies implemented that contributed to or aligned with the indicator

Strategies implemented in 2021 – 2023 that have ongoing impact

3.1 Ensure the updated parental leave progression entitlements in the 2020 EBA and its successor are being applied and communicated to staff – Action: Communicate updates and reminders of parental leave and its associated entitlements to staff on an annual basis

3.2 Evaluate overtime amounts in 'COVID-normal' business operations – Action: Analyse and compare overtime amounts when a full year of events has resumed to validate if a gender difference exists

3.3 *Provide fair and equitable opportunities for all staff to undertake higher duties* – Action: Ensure that higher duties opportunities are aligned with the Recruitment Policy and Procedure

3.4 Ensure that all recruitment and reclassifications have salaries that are benchmarked with experience and comparable roles Actions: Managers continue to work with People &Culture on benchmarking salaries; Create a remuneration panel (two people) for recruitment of staff into VPS5 and above; Review Recruitment Policy and Procedure to include a process that ensures recruitment and reclassifications receive salaries benchmarked against experience and comparable roles.

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Workplace Gender Equality Indicator 4

Sexual harassment in the workplace



Progress made: No (Stable progress)

- The VFA did not receive any formal reports of sexual harassment in both the 2025 and 2023 reporting periods. This does not necessarily mean that a problem doesn't exist as there may be reasons reports haven't been made, for example, not feeling safe to speak up.
- The VFA received from the Commissioner for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, an exemption from participating in an employee experience survey in 2025. Therefore, there is no employee experience data available for the 2025 reporting period.

- For both the 2023 and the 2024 People Matter surveys five people indicated they had experienced sexual harassment in the last 12 months. Further information was not published by the Victorian Public Sector Commission (VPSC) as it protects anonymity when there is less than 10 people responding to a question.

Factors contributing to or limiting progress

- (a) The VFA is a relatively small to medium organisation which means that employee experience data is not always available as there may be a small number of survey respondents answering a question relating to sexual harassment.
- (b) The Victorian Government endorsed a range of budget initiatives which necessitated reprioritisation of existing activities and resources across the VPS. For the VFA this resulted in a restructure. The timing of this, including the planning and consultation with employees took over six months towards the end of the reporting period. The VFA received from the Commissioner for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, an exemption from participating in an employee experience survey in 2025. Therefore, there is no data available for the 2025 reporting period.

- (g) Genuine attempts have been made to make progress through the ongoing actions to reduce the incidence of sexual harassment and provide the supports needed for those experiencing the negative behaviour.

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Strategies implemented that contributed to or aligned with the indicator

4.1 Raise awareness of contact points and resources for those who may have experienced, or are experiencing, sexual harassment – Actions: Source an anonymous whistle-blower program for staff; Analyse People Matter Survey results, address trends and assess the need for further risk treatments; and Promote current available resources for staff seeking advice or assistance on matters relating to sexual harassment in the workplace.

4.2 Implement the VFA's sexual harassment risk treatment plan – Actions: Embed into all communications that we communicate in line with our values, that we are all accountable to ourselves, our team, the VFA and our community to provide a safe and respectful environment that is free from all forms of sexual harassment; Add a statement regarding values and acceptable behaviour to a template agenda for all meetings; For incidents that are handled informally, explore methods to identify patterns, recognise causes and identify if any further treatment is needed; Develop a plan to prevent and mitigate sexual harassment when dealing with stakeholders and members of the public, utilising anonymous feedback mechanisms for staff, plus other enforcement agency processes as reference; and Review the VFA's Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedure

4.3 Maintain biannual sexual harassment training – Action: Plan, source and implement sexual harassment training

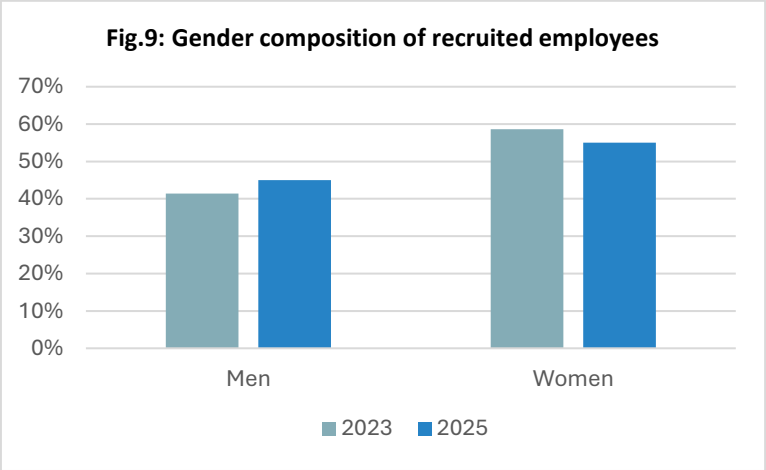
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Workplace Gender Equality Indicator 5

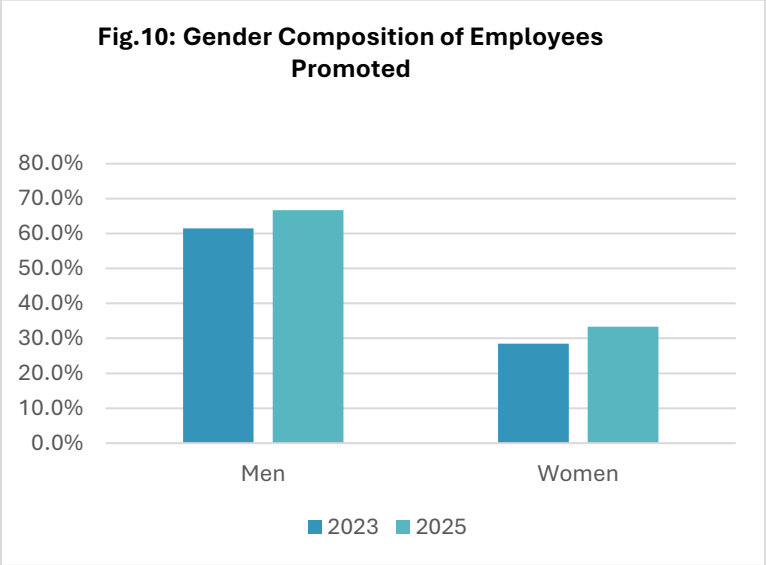
Recruitment and promotion in the workplace

Progress made: No (Stable progress)

- More women were recruited than men (55%/45%). There was a slight decrease in the percentage of women being recruited between the 2023 and 2025 periods (58.6% to 55%). When compared with the overall workforce composition, recruitment is helping shift the balance.



- There was a slight decrease in the percentage of promotions who were women (38.5% to 33.3%). Noting that only 6 people were promoted in the 2025 reporting period compared with 26 people in 2023.



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- The VFA received from the Commissioner for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, an exemption from participating in an employee experience survey in 2025. Therefore, there is no employee experience data available for the 2025 reporting period on the perceptions of recruitment and promotion.
- In relation to exits during the reporting period there remains a high proportion of women exiting compared with the proportion of women making up the gender composition. Further analysis is needed to understand why more women are exiting.

  While there were 20 people recruited in the 2025 reporting period, 22 exited. Of the 22 exits, there were 10 women (45.5%) and 12 men (54.5%) ranging from (VPS 2 to 6). The number of women exiting is disproportionate to the gender composition of women (35.9%).
- Career Development training was put on hold for part of the reporting period, however for FY23/24 55% of employees undertaking career development training were women.
- The percentage of women undertaking higher duties is disproportionate to the gender composition of women.

Factors contributing to or limiting progress

- (a) The VFA is a relatively small to medium organisation with many long-term employees which means that opportunities for promotion can be limited.
- (b) The Victorian Government endorsed a range of budget initiatives which necessitated reprioritisation of existing activities and resources across the VPS. For the VFA this resulted in a restructure. The timing of this, including the planning and consultation with employees took over six months towards the end of the reporting period. The VFA put recruitment on hold for a period.
- (g) Genuine attempts have been made to make progress through recruitment and promotion practices, education and career support practices.

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Strategies implemented that contributed to or aligned with the indicator

Strategies implemented in 2023-2025:

5.4 Ensure that internal secondments or reclassifications are recorded and analysed for gender differences – Actions: Explore and analyse options to collect both internal secondment and promotion (reclass) data through the existing HR management system; and when data is available to collect, ensure it is shared with staff and that actions developed if required.

Strategies implemented in 2021 – 2023 that have ongoing impact

5.1 Identify job specific development needs targeted at bridging capability gaps for staff newly appointed into roles – Action: Develop a template to support the creation of individual development plans for staff newly appointed into roles to ensure the development of the knowledge and skills needed for the role, where required.

5.2 Eliminate potential unconscious bias in our recruitment processes – Action: conduct training for hiring managers on processes, unconscious bias, raising awareness and building a diverse workforce.

5.3 Review recruitment processes to attract greater diversity in candidates – Actions: Review language in job descriptions and advertisements in consultation with specialists in diversity and inclusion to ensure they are accessible to all; and implement appropriate wording and guidance; and apply special measures to recruitment processes for identified roles.

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Workplace Gender Equality Indicator 6

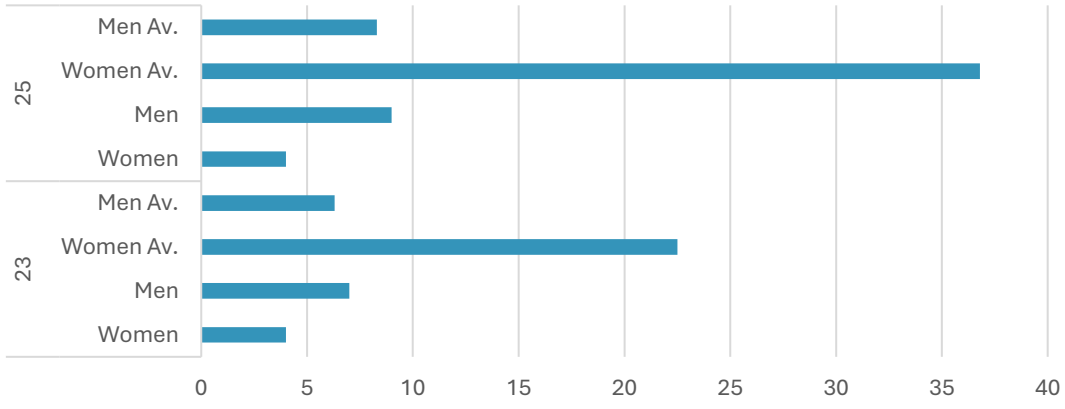
Availability and utilisation of terms, conditions and practices relating to family violence leave, flexible working arrangements and working arrangements supporting workers with family or caring responsibilities

Progress made: YES

Parental leave

- The number of men taking parental leave increased by 2 while women remained the same compared with 2023.
- More men than women took parental leave. For both women and men, the average weeks of parental leave increased between 2023 and 2025.
- Over both reporting periods, only women took unpaid parental leave. There could be gendered differences in the perception of taking unpaid parental leave.
- Note also that an increase to paid parental leave entitlements from the Australian Government came into effect in the reporting period.
- In both the 2025 and 2023 reporting periods one woman voluntarily exited while on parental leave.

Fig.11: Composition of parental leave takers and average length of parental leave by gender



	23				25			
	Women	Men	Women Av.	Men Av.	Women	Men	Women Av.	Men Av.
parental Leave	4	7	22.5	6.3	4	9	36.8	8.3

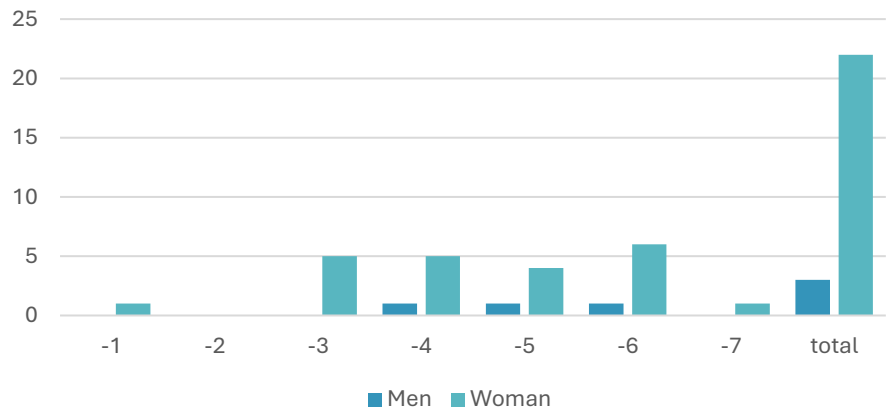
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Flexible Work

- The record of the number of employees taking up flexible work has decreased significantly between the two reporting periods. This is a result of flexible working arrangements involving working from home not being re-entered into the new HR system in late 2023. Revised policies and procedures relating to the recording and approval of formal flexible work arrangements need to be put into place.
- The data does not reflect:
    - the high proportion of non-rostered staff on flexible work arrangements, namely working from home 2 to 3 days a week.
    - there is also an element of flexibility available for rostered employees through rostering for some flexibility while still meeting business delivery needs.
- The VFA received from the Commissioner for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, an exemption from participating in an employee experience survey in 2025. Therefore, there is no employee experience data available for the 2025 reporting period on the perceptions of flexible work culture.

  For the 2023 period, 69% women and 62% men participating in the survey agreed if requested a flexible work arrangement would be given due consideration. Further analysis in the absence of 2025 experience data is needed to see if perceptions have remained positive.

Fig. 12: Flexible working arrangements by gender and level 2025



Carer's leave

- The uptake of carer's leave has decreased for both women and men between the two reporting periods with more men taking carers leave than women in both 2023 and 2025. The reason for the higher uptake in 2023 is likely due to this time including COVID-19 lock down periods.

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Factors contributing to or limiting progress

g) Genuine attempts have been made to make progress through focusing on education, communication and increased supports for both managers and employees.

Strategies implemented that contributed to or aligned with the indicator

Strategies implemented/started in 2023-2025:

6.2 Provide training to managers in supporting those experiencing family violence – Action: Commission a specialist organisation to facilitate ongoing training programs for managers

6.4 Provide opportunities for job-sharing, part-time and flexible working arrangements, where applicable – Action: Undertake an assessment to identify flexible options for roles (link to the Recruitment Policy)

6.5 Gain insight into initiatives and programs for supporting the individual needs of staff returning to the workplace after a career break – Action: Develop a template to support managers and staff through the process leading up to, during and returning to the workplace from a career break

Strategies implemented in 2021 – 2023 that have ongoing impact

6.1 Raise awareness on family violence leave policy and processes and contact officers – Action: Promote current available resources for staff seeking advice or assistance on matters relating to family violence leave

6.3 Improve education around access to flexible working arrangements for those seeking it – Actions: Include flexibility in our recruitment material and discuss as part of recruitment process (position description, interview guide, offer); Maintain communications around available flexible working arrangements; and Educate leaders to support flexible working arrangements

6.6 Manager and staff member understand individual workload challenges and pressures – Action: As part of the PDR process, individual workload challenges and pressures are discussed at the commencement, midcycle and end-of-PDR cycle

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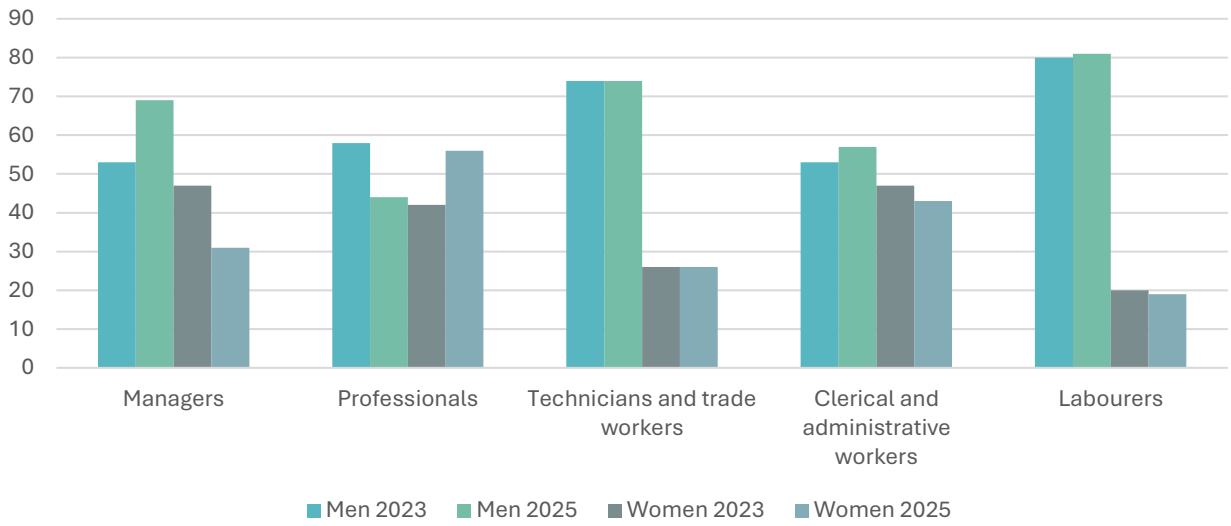
Workplace Gender Equality Indicator 7

Gendered segregation within the workplace

Progress made: No

- The change in both the Professionals and Managers groups may be partly due to the re-classification of some roles between the two occupation groups. When both groups are combined the composition of women is 42.4%. For each group the number of women has:
  - Increased in the Professionals group (42.1% to 55.6%).
  - Decreased in the Managers group (47.4% to 31.3%).
- Technicians and Trade Workers have stayed the same 25.8% women. This group represents the VFA's Fisheries Officers.
- There has been a slight decrease in women for:
  - Clerical and Administrative Workers (47.4% to 43.5%) and
  - Labourers (20% to 18.8%).
- The graduate intake on 1 July 2024 consisted of 6 women and 2 men. They have been grouped in the Clerical and Administrative Workers occupation group.

Fig.13: Percentage composition of staff across the VFA's occupation groups



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Factors contributing to or limiting progress

- (b) The Victorian Government endorsed a range of budget initiatives which necessitated reprioritisation of existing activities and resources across the VPS. For the VFA this resulted in a restructure. The timing of this, including the planning and consultation with employees took over six months towards the end of the reporting period.
- (d) Organisation resources, particularly Management and People and Culture were focused on delivering the change while maintaining business as usual activities.
- (g)Genuine attempts have been made by the VFA to make progress through the implementation of strategies listed in column S and through the continued application of policies and processes that were put in place in the 21-23 period that laid a foundation for ongoing progress.

Strategies implemented that contributed to or aligned with the indicator

Strategies implemented in 2023-2025:

7.1 Embed gender impact assessment in decision making – Action: Implement training for all staff so that any decision-making process i) considers how the policy/program/service can better meet the needs of different genders, ii) addresses gender inequality that may be shaped by other aspects of identity, and iii) promotes gender equality

7.2 Generate collaboration during the implementation of the GEAP – Action: Establish a cross-functional cross-level diverse working group to operate as key influencers and advocates

7.4 Launch a new Women in Recreational Fishing (WIRF) Strategy by March 2022 – Action: Use surveys from the WIRF community and the Victorian public to inform our knowledge of the external perception of the VFA brand

Strategies implemented in 2021 – 2023 that have ongoing impact

7.1 Embed gender impact assessment in decision making – Actions: Identify programs, policies and services that have direct and significant public impact; and Implement training in conducting gender impact assessments for managers developing or reviewing policies, programs or services that directly and significantly impact on the public.

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7.3 Attract diverse groups to work in the VFA – Actions: Undertake targeted Fisheries Officer recruitment drives to improve our diversity; and Implement the GoTafe Arcadia hatchery employment strategy to achieve 50% Indigenous employment at the hatchery

7.4 Launch a new Women in Recreational Fishing (WIRF) Strategy by March 2022 – Action: Use surveys from the WIRF community and the Victorian public to inform our knowledge of the external perception of the VFA brand.

7.5 Improve engagement with diverse communities -Actions: Establish a Community Reference Group as a platform for assisting Cultural and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) communities to engage with the VFA and contribute to fisheries resource management discussions; and continue to implement initiatives from the VFA Accessibility Action Plan to engage with people of all abilities

7.6 Utilise whole-of-government surveys to improve our knowledge, understanding and awareness of gendered segregation in the workplace – Actions: Encourage staff participation in the annual People Matter Survey; Encourage staff participation in government surveys such as Whole-of-Victorian Government pulse surveys and the Australian Workplace Equality Index Employee Survey; and Communicate results of all surveys involving the VFA to staff.

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3. Reporting on GEAP Strategies

Key Achievements in the reporting period 2023 - 2025

The VFA had key achievements across all four focus areas of its GEAP 2021-2025 during the reporting period 2023-25.

Focus Area - Attraction and Recruitment: *We will focus on ensuring our attraction and recruitment processes have a diverse and intersectional lens, reducing the impact of conscious and unconscious bias and leading to greater gender diversity across all levels of staff including senior leadership.*

- *Strategy 1.5 Continue to learn about the barriers to achieving greater gender composition – Action: Work with DoT systems to ensure intersectional data is collected in the new HR system*
  - The process to collect demographic data in the HR system was established. Through quarterly communications encouraging staff to complete diversity data in the HR Employee System (HRESS) there has been an increase in the number of employees providing some diversity information – March 2024 (14%) to June 2025 (45%). While much of this information is incomplete in terms of the level of information provided it has still led to an increase in diversity data in HRESS.

- *Strategy 5.4 Ensure that internal secondments or reclassifications are recorded and analysed for gender differences – Actions: Explore and analyse options to collect both internal secondment and promotion (reclassification) data through existing HR management system; and When data is available to collect, ensure it is shared with staff and that actions developed if required.*
  - Created a manual Excel database and established an ongoing process where data is maintained for internal promotions through recruitment processes and reclassifications.
  - Established a process to communicate to employees on a periodic basis regarding gender differences in internal promotions via formal recruitment and reclassifications.

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Focus Area - Career Development and Support: *We will focus on developing talent and providing support through various forms of flexibility and ensuring equitable pay conditions and access to training and development that supports our staff in their career progression.*

- *Strategy 6.4 Provide opportunities for job sharing, part time and flexible working arrangements, where applicable – Action: Undertake an assessment to identify flexible options for roles (and link to Recruitment Policy)*
  - Recruitment templates including Position Descriptions, interview template and selection report cover flexibility considerations.
  - The use of the templates and the process in place means each time a role comes up for recruitment an assessment of flexible options is undertaken as business as usual.
- *Strategy 6.5 Gain insight into initiatives and programs for supporting the individual needs of staff returning to the workplace after a career break – Action: Develop a template to support managers and staff through the process leading up to, during and returning to the workplace from a career break*
  - The development, publication and communication of guidelines to support managers and staff through the process leading up to, during and returning to the workplace from a career break and parental leave undertaken and in place.

Focus Area - Education and Awareness: *We will focus on educating staff on how they can promote gender equality in their everyday work and lives. We will continue to collect and analyse gender disaggregated data and use it to inform our decision making and raise awareness.*

- *Strategy 3.2 Evaluate overtime amounts in 'COVID-normal" business operations – Action: Analyse and compare overtime amounts when a full year of events has resumed to validate if a gender difference exists.*
  - Overtime data could not be provided by Payroll for just events so all overtime data was considered. Initial high-level analysis shows a higher uptake by men across all Divisions compared with gender composition. Areas for greater analysis to be planned and undertaken.

- Strategy 7.1 *Embed gender impact assessment in decision making – Action: Implement training for all staff so that any decision-making process i) considers how the policy/program/service can better meet the needs of different genders, ii) addresses gender inequality that may be shaped by other aspects of identity, and iii) promotes gender equality.*
  - Following the delivery of externally sourced Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) training to selected Managers, GIA in-house VFA training was developed and piloted with VFA tools and templates in late 2024. Two more groups were trained to further test the tools and templates. The VFA intranet has been updated to provide access to the VFA tools and templates for all employees to use in undertaking a gender impact assessment. A library of VFA GIA examples has been created. Inhouse VFA GIA training will continue to be delivered.

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***Focus Area - Communication Internal and External**: We will partner with key stakeholders to promote gender equality and respect. We will ensure that effective two-way communication channels are established to promote the actions of the plan and seek feedback on its progress. We will advocate for gender equality and the prevention of violence against women.*

- *Strategy 7.2 Generate collaboration during the implementation of the GEAP – Action: Establish a cross-functional cross-level diverse working group to operate as key influencers and advocates*
    - The establishment of an organisation wide staff *Respect and Inclusion Focus group*. The group consists of nine representatives from across the three divisions of the organisation at varying VPS grades which meets 4 - 6 times a year. The Focus Group and its members:
        - advocate and support respect, inclusion, diversity and equality across the VFA by:
            - considering the existing VFA directions/actions/activities and identifying potential changes or additions that could achieve improvements
            - promoting diversity activities to teams, staff-led networks and/or groups and gather feedback as needed, and
            - providing feedback on the diversity related implementation plans and upcoming activities which will also inform future activities.
        - champion key diversity initiatives including the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) deliverables. This can include any key actions that the Focus Group has special interest and influence on across the VFA.
        - support two-way communication on relevant matters and actions.

- *Strategy 7.4 Launch a new Women in Recreational Fishing and Boating (WIRFaB) Strategy*

    - A new strategy, incorporating boating and developed using workshop consultation and survey data was finalised and launched in the reporting period. The WIRFaB online network has over 4,300 members.

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Incomplete Strategies

Overall, there were six strategies that had incomplete actions.

Talent Strategy

Two of the incomplete strategies related to the development of a talent strategy

- ***1.1 Identify and develop talent within the VFA –*** *Actions: The development and implementation of a talent strategy that supports gender, diversity and inclusion and considers intersectionality.*
- ***5.5 Explore options for leadership programs and formal and informal mentoring programs*** *Action: Following the development of the Talent strategy, a leadership program and formal and informal mentoring opportunities were to be planned.*

  It was decided that a Workforce Strategy incorporating a talent strategy, leadership program and mentoring was needed. While this has not been developed yet due to Whole of Government budget re-prioritisations and limited People and Culture resources, some actions were undertaken to help inform the development of a workforce strategy. Several talent development actions were undertaken and/or piloted, including a development program for Fisheries Officers which led to a slight increase in women in senior roles in the division. Graduate recruitment (6 women, 2 men) was undertaken in 2024 in Fisheries Management with a two-year development program. Staff at VPS levels 1 to 4 were provided an opportunity to attend the Emerging Professional network.

Flexible Working Arrangements

- ***6.3 Improve education around access to flexible working arrangement for those seeking it –*** *Action: Undertake a gender impact assessment on the uptake of flexible working arrangements.*

  There were several HR system changes and limitations that delayed this action. Given the limited People and Culture resources and the restructure that was undertaken in 2025 it was decided to put this action on hold. This strategy will be revisited in the future.

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Education and Training

Three of the six strategies with incomplete actions were training related:]

- ***4.1 Raise awareness of contact points and resources for those experiencing sexual harassment –*** *Action: Train additional contact officers to ensure widespread representation across the VFA.*
  A decision was made to stay with the two existing contact officers as an anonymous whistleblower program had been introduced and the access to information on the intranet streamlined and improved. The need for additional contact officers will be revisited in the future.

- ***4.3 Maintaining biannual sexual harassment training –*** *Action: Plan, source and implement sexual harassment training for 2023 and 2025*
  The implementation of biannual sexual harassment training was not maintained in 2025 as VFA undertook a restructure in 2025 and the timing needed to be reviewed. A training provider has been identified, and training is being planned.

- ***6.1 Provide training to managers in supporting those experiencing family violence –*** *Action: Commission a specialist organisation to facilitate ongoing training programs for managers*
  The VFA People and Culture Manager reviewed several courses available, and a specialist training provider has been identified to deliver training to managers who are supporting staff experiencing family violence. The tailored program is planned for delivery in FY25/26.

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Challenges in the reporting period 2023 - 2025

- Integrating effective initiatives into broader strategies and general practice that achieves lasting change, particularly when employees and leaders change.
- Effective and informative intersectional data has not been collected and/or is not easily accessed.
- Recognising that although changes occurred with lots of initiatives put in place as shown in the 21-23 indicators; focus and momentum needs to be maintained as things change, and strategies and actions sometimes need to be reshaped.
- There appears a level of discomfort for some leaders and employees in relation to challenging social norms which can lead to resistance to change.
- The VFA is a relatively small to medium organisation with limited resource capacity that went through a restructure in 2025.
- Long-held perceptions by some, for example:
  - changes need to be driven by women and focused on women,
  - the implementation of the GEAP is seen as a compliance exercise to be undertaken by People and Culture rather than a set of strategies and actions that everyone has a role in helping to implement and/or progress and that will benefit the VFA and its stakeholders.

Lessons Learned in the reporting period 2023 - 2025

- Communication
  - Leadership needs to be more visible with communication and actions that help ensure that employees understand everyone's role in progressing gender equity.
  - More regular communication is needed and must be maintained across all initiatives and reports by executives, senior management and team leaders. Need to ensure that the Respect and Inclusion Focus Group and employee surveys continue to be utilised for engagement and two-way communication.
- Data and Monitoring
  - Regular monitoring of data around key measures, perhaps annually/six monthly is needed so that the most current information is known to not only measure progress but importantly to inform or reshape strategies and actions.
  - The VFA acknowledges that gender inequality is compounded by race, age, and ability, but it lacks intersectional data. We need to continue to ensure that an intersectional approach is used in gender impact assessments.
- Strategies and actions
  - Consider strategies and actions in terms of their short- and longer-term impacts, given progress is not going to be linear.

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Resources in the reporting period 2023 - 2025

- **People resources**
    - The VFA had a workforce headcount of 192 at 30 June 2025.
    - To facilitate the implementation of the VFA's first GEAP the VFA relied on its inhouse People and Culture Team which consists of two FTE – the People and Culture Manager and People and Culture Advisor. It was undertaken in conjunction with their substantive roles.
    - The VFA utilised existing people resources where possible. For specialist advice, subject matter expertise and training delivery the VFA utilised where appropriate sources from a VPS Community of Practice and/or external providers.
    - To ensure ongoing implementation in 2023-2025, particularly with the need for greater focus on gender impact assessments a VFA senior management resource took on leadership of the implementation in conjunction with their substantive role and worked closely with the People and Culture Team.
- **Financial, Technological, Physical and Time resources**
    - Any external training was funded through Organisation/Division budgets along with other training initiatives.
    - The VFA underwent two portfolio department HR system changes/implementation in 12 months with the second one occurring in late 2023.
    - The process of the restructure of the VFA impacted all employees. It impacted the responsibilities and available time of Senior leaders and the People and Culture Team in implementing GEAP strategies.

While adequate resources were allocated, in the context of an organisation the size of the VFA, there was no contingency to help cope with the significant changes that the VFA experienced in FY24/25 and the strain placed on resources. Contingency planning is needed in the future.

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