

Gender Equality Action Plan

2021–2024



Contents

A message from the CEO	3
Our organisation	4
Gender equality in our workplace	6
Our audit - identifying themes and issues	9
Developing our Plan	10
Resourcing our Gender Equality Action Plan	11
Measuring our progress	11
Our strategies and measures	12

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on all Austin Health sites. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

We celebrate, value and include people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures, bodies and abilities.

We thank GenderWorks who partnered with us through the development of this plan for their guidance and support.

If you have any questions or feedback about our plan, please email Diversity&Inclusion@austin.org.au



A message from the CEO

I am delighted to present Austin Health's Gender Equality Action Plan.

This plan provides a clear set of strategies and actions that will guide our priorities over the next four years. Whilst we are in the early phases of our gender equality journey, I believe this plan will position Austin Health to make meaningful progress and demonstrate our strong commitment to providing a workplace that is fair and equitable for people of all genders.

Our plan was developed following assessment of available workforce data and consultation with employees. Through this process we learnt that not everyone experiences our workplace in the same way, and we need to do more to create a workplace that provides all our people with equal rights, opportunities and benefits.

I am grateful to everyone who has shared their personal and professional experiences and demonstrated such passionate engagement throughout the consultation process. This has allowed Austin Health to develop a plan that ensures we prioritise the needs of our workforce and focus on initiatives that we know are important to our people.

Bringing this plan to life will have an impact in creating a positive and safe workplace culture and ultimately better outcomes for our patients, their families and the wider community.

I look forward to championing and supporting each of the strategies and actions in the plan and being a visible role model for gender equality at Austin Health.



Adam Horsburgh
Chief Executive Officer

Our organisation

Austin Health is one of Australia's major health services. Based in Melbourne's north-east, our hospitals include Austin Hospital (incorporating the Olivia Newton-John Centre), Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, and Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre. We serve one of the fastest growing regions in Melbourne with a combined population of some 350,000 people.

We provide health services in community locations and at home, through our Health and Rehabilitation Centre, Health Independence programs, our strong mental health and Hospital in the Home services. We offer specialist care for cancer, infectious diseases, obesity, liver transplant, spinal cord injury, intensive care medicine, neurology, endocrinology, mental health and rehabilitation.

We are internationally recognised for our teaching, professional education and training. We have affiliations with 16 universities and four TAFEs and are the largest training provider for specialist physicians and surgeons in Victoria. We are a renowned centre of excellence for hospital-based research.

We also provide state-wide services to residents across Victoria including the Acquired Brain Injury Unit, Austin Toxicology Service, Victorian Liver Transplant Unit, Victorian Poisons Information Centre, Victorian Respiratory Support Service and Victorian Spinal Cord Service.



Last financial year, we handled

110,298 inpatient admissions
86,498 emergency presentations
5,867 telehealth consultations

We employ over 10,000 staff

and are supported by

an army of over 500 volunteers

From the responses received in the 2021 People Matter employee engagement survey, we know that collectively our staff include:

31%
who were not born in Australia

23%
who speak a language other than English

8%
who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, asexual or use a different term to describe their sexuality

Less than **1%**
who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

47%
who work part time

51%
who have caring responsibilities

4%
who have a disability

Gender equality in our workplace

In developing our Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP), Austin Health has been guided by the following gender equality principles set out in the Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic). We believe that everyone “should live in a safe and equal society, have access to equal power, resources and opportunities and be treated with dignity, respect and fairness”.¹

Case for change

A gender balanced and diverse workforce has benefits for everyone. It will:

- attract a workforce of talented and engaged employees which in turn will be more efficient in supporting and delivering care to the community we serve and improving our reputation
- create an environment where different perspectives help solve complex issues and challenges
- improve employee and patient safety and the prevention of violence in the workplace
- have a positive impact on our culture and support behavioural change and the ability to challenge gender stereotypes
- improve the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and have a positive impact on patient care.

¹ Section 6 of the Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic).

Our commitments

At Austin Health we are committed to:

- creating a fair, unbiased, and inclusive environment for employees of all genders, including woman, man, transgender, gender fluid, non-binary and people of all diverse genders and sexualities
- working hard to reduce gender-based disadvantage across our workforce
- ensuring our employees of all genders enjoy equal rights, and opportunities and can feel free and empowered to be themselves
- educating our people that it is everyone's responsibility to reduce unconscious bias, gender assumptions and inequality in the workplace
- treating each other with respect, taking proactive action and speaking up when we notice something isn't right
- being adaptive and agile to new ways of thinking and acknowledging that to achieve gender equality we may need to put special measures in place to address intersectional inequality and unfair practices or policies that are currently in place.

Our Gender Equality Action plan will build on other plans, measures and frameworks in place to support our gender equality journey. Current activities include our:

- Diversity and Inclusion Plan, Aboriginal Employment Plan and Reconciliation Action Plan
- training and education including our Aboriginal Cultural Awareness training, Living our Values training, and Recruitment for Success training
- participation in Midsumma Pride march and recognition of key dates on the LGBTIQ+ calendar
- established Diversity and Inclusion Committee
- continued efforts to evolve our diversity and inclusion educational resources on the intranet for managers and staff across the various dimensions of diversity (CALD, gender equality, LGBTIQ+, Aboriginal inclusion, disability, generational diversity)
- pronoun badges which we support and encourage staff to wear
- annual diversity and inclusion calendar, which celebrates the diversity of our staff and recognises days of cultural and religious significance such as Harmony Day, Ramadan, Chinese New Year, Orthodox Easter, Jewish New Year, as well as many more.
- annual International Women's Day event and remarkable women of Austin Health award
- implementation of the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework including a suite of training resources to support our staff identify and respond to family violence.



Our audit – identifying themes and issues

Our workplace gender audit highlighted priority areas to include in this plan, most notably the need to improve data collection capabilities across all indicators. Over time, these improvements will increase our ability to focus on the intersectional nature of gender equality, and these strategies and measures will be captured in future plans.

Our audit also identified several opportunities that were explored through the consultation process. These have been addressed in our strategies and actions and include the following.

Sexual harassment – our data showed that sexual harassment is under reported (including sexual harassment perpetrated by patients on our employees). We sought to understand why this was happening and to implement strategies and initiatives that support and educate staff to report all incidences of sexual harassment in the workplace.

Recruitment and promotion – we identified perceptions among our people of all genders that told us we need to ensure recruitment practices and career opportunities are fair and equitable for all.

Flexible working – whilst employees generally felt positive about the accessibility and utilisation of leave and flexibility at Austin Health, we identified there is still more we could do to support our people to ensure they have a well-balanced personal and professional lives.

Developing our plan

Austin Health's approach to consultation was to report back to the workforce about the themes and issues that were identified through the audit process and explore these themes in a variety of forums. These forums consisted of:

- an online survey open to all staff where anonymous feedback could be provided
- facilitated online consultation sessions
- facilitated Board and Executive consultation session
- discussion with departing Chief People and Culture Officer
- facilitated discussion with Chief Nursing Officer and identified nursing staff focusing on sexual harassment.

We also corresponded with each of the Unions that we work with and shared the themes identified through the audit and People Matter engagement survey. Each union was invited to provide feedback on the themes and/or to share any feedback or observations around gender equality at Austin Health.

Employee privacy and confidentiality was maintained throughout the consultation process and employee supports (such as EAP) were promoted to all employees.



Resourcing our GEAP

It is recognised that contributing to gender equality is a shared responsibility across Austin Health and will be supported by the Executive and the Board.

Austin Health has a dedicated Diversity and Inclusion Manager within People and Culture who will primarily be responsible for leading initiatives in our plan. It is anticipated that through the life of the plan, the Diversity and Inclusion Manager will devote approximately 25% of their time delivering the initiatives in the GEAP.

Additional support and assistance will be provided as required by other departments both across the organisation and within People and Culture.

Over the life of the GEAP, an annual operating plan will be developed to prioritise the initiatives in the plan and expenditure for relevant initiatives will be allocated and funded through our internal operating budgets.

Measuring our progress

The GEAP provides an opportunity for Austin Health to track, measure and assess the impact of our work. Measuring our progress and tracking our commitments is important but it is also critical that we identify approaches to engage with our people through the life of the GEAP.

We will establish and maintain annual reporting on the actions in our GEAP to staff, Executive and Board. We will also provide regular opportunities to engage with our people on progress of the GEAP and for suggestions as to how we can do better.

Austin Health is also required to report our progress to the Commission every second year, the first of which is due on 31 October 2023.

Our strategies and measures

Overarching strategies

Strategy	Action	Accountability
Establish an effective governance and accountability framework for progress toward workplace gender equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appoint an Executive sponsor to support the delivery of the GEAP - Determine the resources and budget needed to implement and monitor the plan - Establish and maintain annual reporting to staff, Executive and Board on the progress of GEAP activities - Provide regular opportunities for engagement with staff on progress of the GEAP and suggestions for improvement 	Chief People and Culture Officer
Create a shared understanding of gender equality across Austin Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Embed and communicate the importance of and outcomes sought by the Gender Equality Act, the GEAP and Gender Impact Assessments (GIA) across all levels of the organisation - Develop a communications plan to engage and educate staff around gender equality, including workplace gender equality and GIAs 	Director, Corporate Communications
Improve data collection capabilities across the seven gender equality indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document systems limitations for full and complete workplace gender audit data collection - Resource and implement priority improvements to ensure improved reporting capability in future reporting periods - Run an annual campaign to encourage people to update their personal details, in line with audit requirements 	Director, HR Shared Services



Indicator 1 – Gender composition of all levels of the workforce

Strategy	Action	Accountability
Strengthen leadership capability and confidence to lead a gender equitable and inclusive workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Embed gender equality content into the new employee and new manager induction programs - Update position descriptions for leaders to embed commitment to workplace gender equality - Include gender equitable training in our leadership training module. - Embed gender equitable and inclusive leadership measures into manager’s performance review and development plans 	Organisational Development Manager
Embed gender targets in identified operational teams, divisions and across workforces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish a working group to lead and implement this initiative and provide advice and recommendation to Executive - Create a plan for embedding realistic targets and making measurable progress - Create a Workplace Gender Equality dashboard to track implementation across business units, teams, and workforces 	Diversity and Inclusion Manager
Increase diversity across leadership cohorts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure flexible work strategies include targeted actions to offer part-time and flexible working arrangements at all leadership levels - Identify and implement advancement strategies for increasing diversity such as mentoring, scholarships, development and education pathways and secondment opportunities 	Diversity and Inclusion Manager

Indicator 2 – Governing body composition

Strategy	Action	Accountability
Strengthen board members' capability and confidence to promote workplace gender equality at Austin Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify opportunities for Board to engage in and support gender equitable strategies - Provide opportunities for Board to attend gender equitable training in our leadership training module - Include workplace gender equality as a regular agenda item in the People and Culture Board sub-committee 	Chief People and Culture Officer

Indicator 3 – Equal remuneration

Strategy	Action	Accountability
Diagnose the status of pay equity at Austin and set goals to address areas of concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish a working group to lead and implement this initiative and provide advice and recommendations to Executive. - Conduct an organisational wide gender pay gap analysis drawing on the Commission guidance on classification levels for the health sector - Develop a plan for making measurable progress on priority areas of concern - Summarise findings and share broad outcomes and goals with the organisation 	Diversity and Inclusion Manager
Take positive action to reduce gender pay gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase understanding and awareness of key pay equity concepts among stakeholders and leaders - Incorporate relevant pay equity metrics into the Workplace Gender Equality dashboard - Provide managers with the tools and training to understand and address factors within their control to assist with reducing identified gender pay gap - Consider establishing a discretionary fund to redress any individual pay gaps - Monitor and report on progress to all stakeholders 	Chief Executive Officer Diversity and Inclusion Manager

Indicator 4 – Sexual harassment in the workplace

Strategy	Action	Accountability
<p>Build a positive workplace culture free from sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia and discrimination in favour of able-bodied people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reinforce clear expectations for all staff, patients, and visitors to ensure respectful workplace behaviours - Establish a plan for regular zero tolerance messaging from executive and senior leadership - Designate key staff with responsibility for maintaining up-to-date knowledge on sexual harassment laws, policies, and practices - Provide sexual harassment prevention training and education for senior management - Deliver Gender Equity and Bystander training across the organisation 	<p>General Counsel Director, Employee Relations</p>
<p>Improve the experiences of staff who experience sexual harassment from workplace colleagues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a process to assess complainant's satisfaction with formal complaints processes - Review our sexual harassment response processes and identify practical ways to incorporate victim survivor-centric care and support mechanisms - Pilot recommended alternative care and support options for staff experiencing sexual harassment 	<p>General Counsel Director, Employee Relations</p>
<p>Implement a comprehensive workplace approach to prevention and response to sexual harassment from patients</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop an educational toolkit to support leaders and staff responding to sexual harassment from patients - Develop a guide for leaders to support staff responding to sexual harassment from patients - Roll out training to support employees manage occupational violence and aggression (including sexual harassment) in high-risk areas 	<p>Director, Health, Safety and Wellness</p>

Indicator 5 – Recruitment and promotion

Strategy	Action	Accountability
<p>Commit to consistent application of gender equitable and inclusive recruitment processes and practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review the end-to end recruitment processes with a gender and intersectional lens and implement recommendations arising from the review - Develop a guide for hiring managers to educate around gender equitable and inclusive recruitment processes - Deliver training to managers to reduce unconscious bias from the recruitment process - Create and promote messaging defining ‘merit’ at Austin Health 	<p>Chief Executive Officer</p> <p>Director, Workforce Planning and Talent Acquisition</p>
<p>Identify and address gendered impacts on access to career progression opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review access to career progression opportunities through a gender lens - Identify specialised leadership and career development programs that support the progression of women, men, and gender diverse employees into leadership roles - Promote career development opportunities to all staff, including part-time and casual staff - Develop strategies to assist staff with caring responsibilities to progress their career 	<p>Diversity and Inclusion Manager</p> <p>Organisational Development Manager</p>

Indicator 6 – Flexible work and leave

Strategy	Action	Accountability
Develop a strategic approach to workplace flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop guiding principles for workplace flexibility - Develop a suite of tools and resources to support managers and employees to implement guiding principles - Promote stories of successful flexible work arrangements across the organisation 	Diversity and Inclusion Manager
Build a culture which supports all employees to access parental leave and return to work support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review parental leave and carers leave policies with an intersectional gender lens - Develop a toolkit to guide leaders and staff in the provision of effective parental leave supports throughout the full cycle of leave and return to work - Develop a process to assess staff satisfaction with parental leave supports 	Diversity and Inclusion Manager
Improve practices related to disclosures of family violence for employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review family violence policy with an intersectional gender lens - Develop a Leaders Guide to responding to disclosures of Family Violence and ensure leaders are appropriately trained - Ensure Contact Officers are trained in responding to family violence 	Chief Allied Health Officer Director, HR Consulting

Indicator 7 – Gendered segregation in the workplace

Strategy	Action	Accountability
Develop and pilot an approach to address gendered segregation in the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish a Working Group to lead and implement this work - Define target groups based on audit baseline data - Conduct analysis of enablers and barriers to gender segregation and develop targeted approaches to tackling gender stereotypes and building a safe workplace culture - Establish targets and timeframes and accountabilities - Monitor and report on progress 	Diversity and Inclusion Manager
Take action to address gender stereotypes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apply a gendered and intersectional lens over corporate collateral - Set expectations for changes in everyday conversations around respectful language and removing gendered language 	Director, Corporate Communications Diversity and Inclusion Manager





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