Gender Equality Action Plan 2025 - 2029

MELBOURNE POLYTECHNIC

Organisation name	Melbourne Polytechnic
Total number of employees (and full-time equivalent FTE), as at 30 June 2025	Total employees: 1441 Total FTE: 893.81
Location	Metropolitan

Attestation by head of organisation

I confirm that:

- ☒ I am the head of organisation (CEO or equivalent).
- ☒ I have reviewed and approved the submission of this gender equality action plan (GEAP) on behalf of my organisation (as named above), and I attest that the implementation of the GEAP will be adequately resourced as required under the Gender Equality Act (2020).

Frances Coppolillo
Chief Executive

Date: 05/05/2026

A) Planning your GEAP

Section 1: Use insights from your previous gender equality work

Melbourne Polytechnic made important foundational progress during the previous GEAP, particularly in strengthening organisational understanding of gender equality and beginning to consolidate responsibility for this work.

However, several factors influenced the extent of implementation. The gender equality function was still developing, and stakeholders across the organisation were managing competing priorities, which limited engagement and contributed to an overly ambitious GEAP that did not achieve consistent buy-in. Manual data systems further constrained effective monitoring and implementation.

These insights have shaped the new GEAP, which is designed to be more achievable and aligned with the organisation's Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan. Many strategies will be delivered through broader transformative projects to ensure coherence. Stakeholders have been more directly engaged in confirming responsibilities, and work is underway to strengthen data systems to better support implementation.

Key lessons from the previous GEAP include:

- Ambition must be balanced with organisational capacity
- Early and consistent engagement with key stakeholders is essential for shared ownership
- Aligned structures and governance significantly improve implementation
- Strengthened data systems are critical to effective monitoring and decision-making
- Embedding gender equality work within broader organisational change frameworks improves coherence and impact.

Section 2: Processes, record keeping and governance

Gender equality work at Melbourne Polytechnic is governed by the Inclusion Respect and Equality Taskforce, an internal group chaired by the Chief Executive and comprising key senior leaders that meets bi-monthly. With a recently refreshed membership and Terms of Reference, it oversees all aspects of transformational change in diversity, inclusion, gender equality and prevention of gender-based violence for our students and staff. It has overseen the development of the GEAP and ensured alignment with other strategic initiatives. It will receive regular updates on implementation of the GEAP strategies and progress against the Workplace Gender Equality Indicators.

In addition, since December 2024, one of the MP Board's sub-committees, the Governance and Culture Committee (GCC), receives reports on MP's compliance with requirements under the Gender Equality Act 2020, including progress reporting to the Commission on, amongst other initiatives, MP's GEAP and its Workplace Gender Audit. The MP Board receives updates on these matters via the report of the GCC Chair to the Board, and from the Chief Executive and other officers under their regular reporting on implementation of the MP Strategic Plan.

The Inclusion Respect and Equality Lead is responsible for record-keeping in all aspects of the GEAP implementation. They are supervised by the Deputy Director Culture and Partnering and the Director People and Culture. They work with the People and Culture Data Analyst and the Culture and Values Lead to source information related to and underpinning the Workplace Gender Audit and the People Matter Survey, respectively.

Section 3: Leadership commitment

Melbourne Polytechnic's Board and executive leadership are strongly committed to advancing gender equality.

Our Chief Executive actively champions this work, regularly hosting and participating in gender equality initiatives, and chairing the Inclusion, Respect and Equality Taskforce. The Executive Director, People and Student Success, provides executive oversight and invests significant time in guiding our gender equality, diversity and inclusion strategies and programs.

To support the development of the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP), Melbourne Polytechnic engaged additional external expertise to assist the Inclusion, Respect and Equality Lead with analysing, reporting on and presenting the Workplace Gender Audit; guiding the consultation process; and contributing to the strategies, targets and other components of the GEAP.

Leadership decision-making has further strengthened this work by bringing together the key functions of Organisational Development, Culture and Values, Data Analytics and Recruitment into a broader People & Culture portfolio. This deliberate realignment has delivered clear benefits, enabling more coordinated action, stronger accountability and increased momentum in progressing gender equality outcomes.

Melbourne Polytechnic also has a long-standing leadership role within the Victorian TAFE sector in preventing gender-based violence through implementation of Our Watch's Respect and Equality in TAFE (RET) framework. Despite some resourcing challenges, we remain firmly committed to this important work. To ensure alignment and consistency, our leadership has endorsed a model in which the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan adopts the RET framework, incorporates gender equity and prevention of gender-based violence priorities, and provides the overarching structure through which most GEAP strategies will be delivered.

B) Consult on your audit results and strategies

Section 4: Confirm consultation groups

You must consult with your...	Confirm yes or no	If no, why not?
Governing body (if your organisation has one)	Yes	
Employees	Yes	
Employee representatives, including relevant trade unions	Yes	

You might consult with...	Confirm yes or no	Please describe additional people and/or groups
Other relevant people	Yes	Women's Health in the South East and Women's Health East (provided consultancy services)

Section 5: Document your consultation process

Meaningful and inclusive consultation was central to developing Melbourne Polytechnic's Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) 2025–2029. Our approach ensured that the voices, experiences and insights of employees across the organisation, as well as specialist gender equality expertise, shaped the priorities and strategies included in this plan. Consultation occurred in two structured phases and was designed to be accessible, trauma-informed and representative of our diverse workforce.

Phase 1: Consulting on workplace gender audit results (November 2025)

The first phase focused on sharing findings from the 2025 Workplace Gender Audit and People Matter Survey, and gathering employee perspectives on the context behind the data-what was driving patterns of inequality, and what actions could address them. Three 90-minute focus groups were held via Microsoft Teams at varied days and times to maximise accessibility, with one-on-one interviews available as an alternative. An anonymous survey was also open to all staff, with a targeted invitation sent to all casual employees. A total of 48 employees participated: 12 in focus groups (10 women and 2 men, including 3 employee representatives), 34 via the anonymous survey, one through a one-on-one interview, and one via email feedback. Participants included staff from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, a person with disability, and staff across professional, management, education and coordination roles. The Board was consulted through a pre-meeting survey and a dedicated 30-minute discussion at the December 2025 Board meeting, focused on strategic priorities and risk.

Phase 2: Consulting on draft strategies (January-February 2026)

This phase presented draft GEAP strategies (countermeasures) developed from audit data, Phase 1 consultation findings, and evidence-based analysis by Women's Health East and Women's Health in the South East. Five 90-minute focus groups were held via Microsoft Teams, again at varied times. An anonymous survey was also available. A total of 19 employees participated: 15 in focus groups (10 women, 4 men and one gender diverse person, including 2 employee representatives) and 4 women via the anonymous survey. Participants included staff from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and a gender diverse person. The final GEAP was presented to the Board at its 28 April 2026 meeting and received very positive feedback, with no changes.

Recruitment and accessibility

Staff were invited through multiple channels including the staff portal, the Chief Executive's weekly email, targeted direct emails to staff from underrepresented communities, and promotion through managers and Culture Ambassadors. Registration forms checked for accessibility requirements, focus group pre-reading was translated into Auslan on video, and Auslan interpretation was available for selected sessions. Separate sessions were scheduled for managers to address power dynamics and enable staff to speak freely.

Creating a safe and inclusive consultation

All sessions were conducted using a trauma-informed approach. Ground rules were established at the outset covering respect, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw. Participants were advised that their contributions would be de-identified and that no negative consequences would follow from honest feedback. Support services including the Employee Assistance Program, Lifeline, Beyond Blue, QLife, and 1800RESPECT — were provided before and after each session. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw consent within 48 hours.

External expertise

Women's Health East and Women's Health in the South East provided specialist gender equality consulting throughout the GEAP development process, including analysis of audit data, development of draft strategies, and guidance on consultation design.

This thorough and inclusive consultation process ensured the GEAP 2025-2029 reflects the lived experiences of our workforce, aligns with best-practice gender equality principles, and supports Melbourne Polytechnic's commitment to creating a fair, safe and equitable workplace for all.

Section 6: Findings from your consultation

Participation was modest across both consultation phases, so the findings should be read as qualitative insights that complement the audit data and support a deeper understanding of those with a lived experience.

Where the audit identified patterns of inequality, consultation helped explain why those patterns exist and what would meaningfully address them. Detailed consultation findings are integrated throughout the strategies in this GEAP.

Understanding the audit: what staff told us (Phase 1)

Staff consultation validated audit findings while surfacing critical insights that quantitative data alone cannot capture.

- On safety, reporting and accountability, staff described a significant trust gap in reporting systems. Staff were not confident on how to report, and expressed a fear of career consequences for doing so particularly for casual and fixed-term staff. Staff identified managers and senior leaders as both the most common source of harmful behaviour and the primary pathway for reporting it, creating a structural barrier to accountability. LGBTIQA+ staff and staff with disability were identified as experiencing the highest rates of harm and the lowest confidence that the organisation would take action.
- On flexibility and parental leave, staff described a gap between formal policy and everyday practice. Access to flexible working was reported as discretionary and manager-dependent, with staff describing “flexibility stigma” where using arrangements was perceived as a lack of commitment. Parental leave patterns were understood as deeply gendered, with expectations that women will take extended leave while men taking more than minimal leave face resistance.
- On workforce segregation and economic equity, staff understood the pay gap not as unequal pay for identical work, but as driven by who holds secure or full-time employment (which in turn impacts who can engage in career development), and who takes career breaks. Women in casual and part-time roles described feeling “stuck” with limited pathways to ongoing employment. Staff from culturally and linguistically diverse communities identified additional barriers including language confidence and limited visibility of diverse leaders in senior roles.
- On career progression, staff described a gap between development activity and genuine advancement - accessing training and acting in higher roles, yet feeling progression remained out of reach. Development opportunities were identified as inequitably distributed, with women, LGBTIQA+ staff, staff with disability and CALD staff describing exclusion from these pathways.

Across all themes, manager behaviour and capability emerged as the single most critical variable shaping staff experiences of safety, flexibility, progression and inclusion.

Board consultation (Phase 1)

Board members identified workforce segregation as the area requiring deepest focus, particularly Melbourne Polytechnic’s role in modelling inclusive trades environments through its Centres of Excellence. The Board emphasised right-sizing the GEAP to be achievable within available resources a lesson from the previous GEAP - while ensuring strategies connect to the Strategic Plan and deliver benefits for students as well as staff. The Board supported building manager capability as a foundational enabler across all priority areas.

Refining strategies: what staff told us (Phase 2)

Phase 2 consultation tested draft strategies with staff and confirmed strong support for formal mentorship programs, secondments as a development pathway, and all actions related to safety and sexual harassment, flexible working arrangements, and manager capability building. Staff provided practical implementation insights, including the importance of ensuring programs are accessible to part-time staff and younger women, linking mentorship with succession planning, and ensuring that flexibility is modelled by senior leaders. Phase 2 findings were used to refine and finalise the strategies and measures in this GEAP.

C) Consider the gender equality and the gender pay equity principles, and intersectionality

Section 7: Consider the gender equality principles

The gender equality principles informed the development of this GEAP across its case for change, consultation, strategy development and leadership engagement. Two principles were particularly influential in shaping Melbourne Polytechnic's strategic priorities.

Principles that drove prioritisation

Principle 8 (intersectionality) was the primary driver of audit analysis. By disaggregating data, Melbourne Polytechnic identified that experiences of safety are not uniform-gender diverse staff reported the highest rates of harm and the lowest confidence in organisational action (31%), while staff with disability reported the second-highest rates across every indicator. This directly elevated safety as a core strategic theme, ensuring countermeasures target the compounding barriers faced by these groups. Principle 5 (violence prevention) reinforced this decision, connecting workplace gender inequality to the drivers of violence against women and recognising Melbourne Polytechnic's unique influence as an educator of future trades workers entering male-dominated industries.

Case for change

The GEAP is grounded in the understanding that gender equality is a human right and precondition to social justice (Principle 3), that it delivers significant economic, social and health benefits for Victoria (Principle 4), and that all Victorians should have access to equal power, resources and opportunities (Principle 1).

Consultation and strategy development

The consultation process reflected that advancing gender equality is a shared responsibility (Principle 6), recognising women's historical experience of discrimination (Principle 9), with targeted outreach to staff from underrepresented communities. Strategies are designed to ensure all people can pursue careers without being limited by gender stereotypes (Principle 7), including countermeasures addressing workforce segregation and rigid masculinity norms. The GEAP recognises that special measures may be necessary (Principle 10), including affirmative recruitment, targeted mentorship, and dedicated support pathways.

Leadership

Board consultation confirmed that gender equality benefits all Victorians regardless of gender (Principle 2). The GEAP is governed through the Inclusion Respect and Equality Taskforce, reflecting shared organisational responsibility.

Section 8: Consider the gender pay equity principles

The gender pay equity principles guided Melbourne Polytechnic's analysis of audit data, consultation process and strategy development for this GEAP.

Analysing audit data

Guided by the principles of transparency (Principle c) and equal remuneration (Principle a), Melbourne Polytechnic looked beyond the narrowing mean base salary gap (5.3%) to examine the median total remuneration gap (10.2%), specifically the median gap at level -2 and below, which widened to 8.3% - indicating strong female executive representation may be masking deeper structural inequity. The pay gap is driven by women's concentration in casual and part-time roles, which lack the loadings and allowances attached to male-dominated categories. Applying the principle that practices must recognise different patterns of labour force participation (Principle d), women's disproportionate uptake of unpaid parental leave (36.5 weeks average versus 1.5 weeks for men) was identified as a structural economic penalty, depressing total remuneration and compounding over a lifetime through reduced superannuation.

Consultation

Gender pay equity data was shared with employees during Phase 1 consultation. Staff validated the structural analysis, articulating that the pay gap is driven by who holds secure employment and who can engage in career development. Staff recommended removing barriers to men taking longer parental leave and challenging assumptions about women as primary carers, reinforcing Principle d. Phase 2 tested draft strategies with staff and employee representatives, reflecting that solutions should be collectively developed (Principle e) and employees, unions and employers should work collaboratively (Principle f).

Strategy development

The GEAP includes strategies to strengthen use of the gender pay gap calculator with intersectional analysis, review pay equity in casual and feminised roles, and address structural drivers through job design (commencing 2027)- ensuring equal pay for work of equal or comparable value (Principle a) is pursued alongside structural reform. An intersectional lens has been applied throughout, recognising that the pay gap

for self-described employees is significantly higher (19.0% for professionals, 21.9% for clerical/administrative) than the headline figure.

Section 9: Consider intersectionality

Melbourne Polytechnic's approach considers intersectionality throughout the development of this GEAP, including:

Audit analysis

The 2025 Workplace Gender Audit data was disaggregated by gender identity, disability status, cultural and linguistic background, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status. This intersectional analysis was the primary driver for prioritising safety as a core theme - revealing disparities that aggregate data would have concealed. Gender diverse staff reported the highest rates of sexual harassment (15%, compared with 3% for women and men), lowest confidence that the organisation takes action (31%), and lowest perceptions of promotion fairness (38.5%). Staff with disability reported the second-highest rates of harm across every indicator. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, CALD employees, and employees with disability were concentrated at lower organisational levels. The pay gap for self-described employees was substantially higher than the headline figure.

Consultation

The consultation process was designed to ensure staff experiencing intersecting disadvantage could contribute meaningfully, with targeted invitations, multiple participation methods, and Auslan interpretation. Staff validated and deepened the intersectional analysis. Participants identified structural barriers and cultural factors, noting gender diverse staff may not speak up because they "don't want the spotlight shone on other areas of their lives - they just want to stay under the radar." Staff from CALD communities described the need to "overcome the disadvantage that people from CALD communities feel against people who speak better English."

Strategy development

Intersectionality is embedded throughout the GEAP's strategies. Countermeasures include targeted mentorship for women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, CALD, gender diverse and staff with disability; dedicated support pathways with LGBTIQA+ and disability expertise; an intersectional lens applied to flexibility policy; and the maintenance and enhancement of the program supporting Board diversity in line with Victorian Guidelines. Several targets include intersectional dimensions-for example, setting a floor of 45% for promotion faimess perceptions, and increasing Board diversity across multiple characteristics.

D) Making a case for change

Section 10: Make a case for change and create a vision

There are many reasons why Melbourne Polytechnic, Large Training Provider of the Year at the Victorian Training Awards for 2024, benefits from making progress to gender equality.

Gender equality supports, aligns with and contributes to: our Strategic Goals, Objectives and Outcomes related to an inclusive culture and a sense of belonging; and our Values (Welcoming, Curious, Collaborative and Accountable), which were developed through extensive staff consultation.

Our vision for gender equality at Melbourne Polytechnic is for all our people to be equally respected, valued and rewarded. Our workforce reflects the gender representation of the Victorian population. Our institute is a safe work environment where people are empowered, they speak up, all voices are heard, barriers are addressed, and opportunities are realised.

A gender equal organisation like that attracts high quality staff and large numbers of engaged students, as well as being resilient, welcoming and a great place to work and study.

It supports us to provide excellent learning experiences that develop skills and capabilities valued by industry and community. This matters to us because we play a central role in supporting economic and community development by providing training to address critical skills gaps, together with increasing workforce participation and social inclusion opportunities. We believe that learning underpins the health and wellbeing of communities and contributes to the economy's strength. Our sphere of influence extends beyond traditional education, actively shaping workforce development, community wellbeing, and sustainable practices in the regions we serve.

Our model of education is designed to be transformative, supporting learners from all backgrounds to achieve their learning objectives and improve career opportunities. This is particularly pertinent in our location in the 'Melbourne growth corridor', which presents both challenges and opportunities of communities facing high rates of unemployment, and where English is not the first language of many of its residents. We also believe we have a role to shift societal gender norms, and we value the way addressing gender inequality among staff flows through to, and impacts, our student body, especially in traditionally male-dominated sectors.

This work is all made more possible when our staff enjoy equal opportunity and our policies, programs and services allow for equitable access for all learners.

E) Analysing your data to identify forms of gender inequality AND developing your strategies

Section 11: Identifying underlying causes of gender inequality

Melbourne Polytechnic's audit data reveals persistent patterns of gender inequality across the seven workplace gender equality indicators.

Understanding why these patterns exist — not just what they are — is essential to developing strategies addressing root causes rather than symptoms. Drawing on audit analysis, staff consultation, and evidence-based research, five interconnected underlying causes have been identified.

Gendered workforce structure and insecure work

Women and self-described staff at Melbourne Polytechnic are concentrated in casual, part- time and feminised roles, while men are disproportionately represented in trades, technical and senior positions. This is the primary structural driver of the gender pay gap - not unequal pay for identical work, but gendered patterns in who works where and on what terms. Only 35.8% of women hold full-time ongoing positions, compared with 42.8% of men. These patterns reflect broader VET sector dynamics - Jobs and Skills Australia identifies a 16% gender pay gap in the VET workforce and casualisation rates significantly above the national average reinforced by Melbourne Polytechnic's own role design, classification structures and recruitment practices.

Rigid gender norms and stereotypes

Gendered expectations shape who applies for which roles, who takes parental leave, and perceptions of leadership material. Staff described men applying for positions they don't fully meet while women hold back, and parental leave patterns that remain deeply gendered despite formal policy neutrality. Research from Jesuit Social Services' The Men's Project demonstrates that rigid masculinity norms in male-dominated environments are associated with elevated risks of poor mental health, suppressed help-seeking, and workplace aggression — patterns directly relevant to Melbourne Polytechnic's trades teaching areas. Staff also identified "flexibility stigma," where using flexible arrangements is perceived as a lack of commitment.

Leadership and management capability

Across this GEAP - including safety, flexibility, career progression and segregation — manager behaviour emerged as the most critical variable. Staff identified managers and senior leaders as both the most common source of harmful behaviour (reported in 48% of bullying cases and 61% of discrimination cases) and the primary gateway to reporting, flexibility and career opportunities. This creates a structural conflict where the people best placed to support staff are also those most frequently identified as the source of harm. Both staff and Board consultation identified building manager capability as the foundational enabler for progress across all indicators.

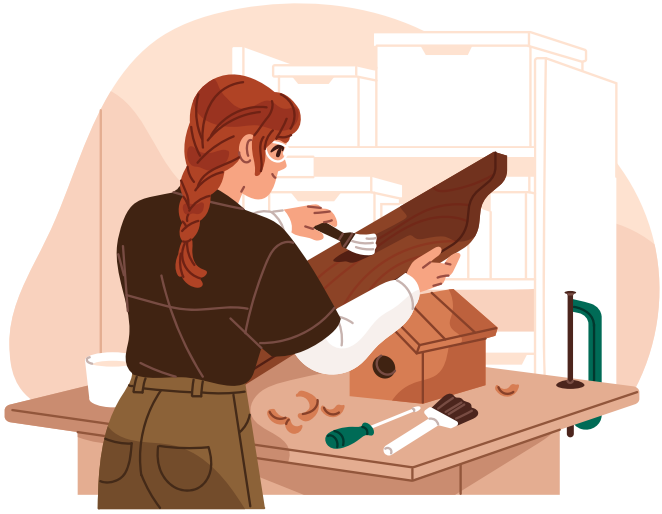
Intersecting and compounding disadvantage

Gender inequality at Melbourne Polytechnic does not affect all staff equally. Gender diverse staff reported the highest rates of sexual harassment (15%), the lowest confidence in organisational action (31%), and the lowest perceptions of promotion fairness (38.5%). Staff with disability reported the second-highest rates of harm across every indicator. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, CALD employees, and employees with disability are concentrated at lower organisational levels. These are not isolated experiences they compound. A gender diverse person with a disability in a casual role faces multiple intersecting barriers simultaneously across safety, pay, progression and flexibility.

The gap between policy and practice

Melbourne Polytechnic has formal systems in place — complaint processes, flexible work policies, and development programs. But staff consultation revealed a consistent gap between what exists on paper and staff experience. Fear of career consequences drives underreporting of harmful behaviour — particularly for casual and fixed-term staff. Flexible work access was described as discretionary and manager-dependent. Development activity was not translating into genuine career advancement. This is fundamentally a trust and implementation gap, requiring visible accountability and consistent practice rather than new policy.

These five underlying causes are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. The strategies in this GEAP are designed to address them at their roots through structural reform, capability building, intersectional targeting, and demonstrated action that builds trust.



Section 12: Analysing your data and documenting your strategies

Indicator 1: Gender composition of all levels of the workforce

Analyse audit data

Critical performance measures:

- Gender composition of the duty holder organisation in 2025: Women 57.8%, men 41.9%, self-described 0.3%
- Gender composition of part time workers in the duty holder organisation in 2025: Women 24.4%, men 15.3%, self-described 50.0%
- Gender composition of senior leaders in the duty holder organisation in 2025: Women 46.4%, men 53.6%, self-described 0.0%

Melbourne Polytechnic's workforce of 1,717 employees (FY25) is majority women (57.5%), with men comprising 41.8% and self-described employees 0.7%. Overall gender composition has remained relatively stable across reporting periods and sits broadly within the 40:40:20 band. However, this headline balance masks significant disparities by organisational level and employment basis.

One important finding is the decline in women's representation in senior leadership. Women held 55.6% of senior leader positions in FY23 but only 46.4% in FY25-a reversal of previous gains that moves the senior leadership cohort out of gender balance. At the same time, men continue to be overrepresented at executive level (Level -1), holding 60% of these positions in FY25. Women and self-described employees remain concentrated at lower organisational levels, with 82.9% at Levels -5 and -6 compared to 80.3% of men - a pattern that has persisted across all reporting periods.

Employment security is also gendered. In FY25, only 35.8% of women and self-described employees held full-time ongoing roles, compared to 42.8% of men. Women's casualisation increased over the period, rising from 35.4% (FY21) to 41.2% (FY25). This concentration in insecure work has direct implications for the gender pay gap (Indicator 3) and career progression (Indicator 5).

Intersectional analysis reveals that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, employees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and employees with disability remain concentrated at lower organisational levels (Levels -3 to -6), with limited representation in senior leadership. Self-described employees represent just 0.7% of the total workforce and 0.0% at senior leader level, and People Matter Survey data shows gender diverse respondents report lower agreement on inclusion measures — only 54% agreed their workgroup acts fairly and without bias, compared to 76% of women and 69% of men.

Note on sample sizes:

Findings related to self-described employees and other small cohorts should be interpreted as directional insights that highlight potential risks rather than statistically representative conclusions.

Problem statement:

While Melbourne Polytechnic's overall workforce composition is broadly balanced, women's representation in senior leadership has declined, women are disproportionately concentrated in lower levels of the organisation and in insecure employment, and employees from marginalised groups face persistent barriers to advancement into senior roles.

Setting metrics

Critical performance measures:

- Gender composition of the duty holder organisation.
- Gender composition of part time workers in the duty holder organisation.
- Gender composition of senior leaders in the duty holder organisation.

Target

- By 2029, restore women's representation in senior leadership to a minimum of 50%, bringing the senior leadership cohort within the 40:40:20 band.

Strategies

Strategy	Responsible	Timeline
Establish formal mentorship programs targeting women and underrepresented groups	Professional Teaching Practice	Development 2027 Implementation 2028 and 2029
Targeted recruitment and succession planning for male dominated roles* *Also in indicator 7	People and Culture (Operations)	2028 and 2029

Indicator 2: Gender composition of the governing body

Analyse audit data

Critical performance measures:

- Gender composition of the duty holder organisation's governing body in 2025: Women 54.5%, men 45.5%, self-described 0.0%

Melbourne Polytechnic's governing body has maintained gender balance across all three reporting periods, with the Chair consistently held by a woman. In FY25, the Board comprised six women and five men, sitting comfortably within the 40:40:20 band. This represents a stable and positive position that the organisation should maintain.

While achieving gender balance is an important milestone, genuine diversity extends beyond gender alone. Although Melbourne Polytechnic does not have direct authority over all aspects of Board appointments, the organisation has an opportunity to advocate for and support the appointment

of members whose lived experience reflects the diversity of the communities it serves including people with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and LGBTQIA+ people.

The FY25 audit indicated emerging progress, with two new Board members reporting additional demographic characteristics that broaden representation.

Problem statement:

Gender balance on the governing body has been achieved and should be maintained. The priority for this GEAP cycle is to strengthen the diversity of the governing body beyond gender, ensuring it reflects the intersectional diversity of Melbourne Polytechnic's workforce and community.

Setting metrics

Critical performance measures:

- Gender composition of the duty holder organisation's governing body.

Target

- By 2029, increase the diversity of the governing body so that it includes members with lived experience, or experience of, at least two of the following characteristics: disability, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identity, CALD background, LGBTQIA+ identity.

Strategy

Strategy	Responsible	Timeline
Maintain and enhance program of Board diversity in line with Victorian Guidelines and subject to the requirements of the Melbourne Polytechnic Constitution	Governance	2026 – 2029

Indicator 3: Equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value across all levels of the workforce, irrespective of gender

Analyse audit data

Critical performance measures:

Mean total remuneration gender pay gap by occupation group in 2025:

- Women
  - Managers: 3.6%
  - Professionals: 0.0%
  - Technicians and Trades Workers: -9.8%
  - Community and Personal Service Workers: 3.1%
  - Clerical and Administrative Workers: 5.8%
  - Sales Workers: -18.0%
  - Machinery Operators and Drivers: 0.0%
  - Labourers: DU (data unavailable)
  - **All occupations: 5.4%**
- Self-described
  - Professionals: 19.0%
  - Clerical and Administrative Workers: 21.9%
  - All other occupation codes: DU
  - **All occupations: 22.6%**

Mean total remuneration senior leader gender pay gap in 2025: Women -1.0%, self-described DU

Supplementary measures:

- Median total remuneration pay gap in 2025: Women 8.3%

Melbourne Polytechnic's gender pay gap presents a mixed picture. The mean base salary gap has steadily narrowed, falling from 7.9% (FY21) to 5.3% (FY25) — broadly in line with the comparator group of TAFES and education providers. However, the median total remuneration gap, which better captures the typical employee experience, has been volatile - narrowing from 18.6% (FY21) to 5.7% (FY23) before widening again to 10.2% in FY25. This divergence between the two measures is significant and points to structural rather than individual drivers.

The headline improvement in mean base salary is partly a compositional effect. More women participated in higher duties and career development training in FY25, lifting average base salaries. However, increased casualisation of women's employment, growth in women's unpaid parental leave uptake, and women's concentration in roles with fewer loadings and allowances meant that total remuneration did not follow the same trajectory. In effect, base salary narrowed while women's actual earnings fell further behind — a pattern that risks being misread as progress.

The 5.4% mean total remuneration gap (all occupations) is not primarily driven by unequal pay for identical work. It reflects gendered workforce segregation (Indicator 7), with women concentrated in lower-paid, feminised and insecure roles, and pay premiums attached to hard-to-recruit male-dominated teaching specialisations. At the senior leader level, the mean total remuneration gap reversed to -1.0% in favour of women, reflecting strong female executive representation — but this masks the deeper structural inequity experienced by the majority of the workforce at Level -2 and below, where the median gap widened to 8.3%.

Intersectional analysis reveals substantially larger pay gaps for self-described employees, with gaps of 19.0% for professionals and 21.9% for clerical and administrative roles.

Problem statement:

While the mean base salary gap is narrowing, the widening median total remuneration gap reveals that structural drivers casualisation, gendered segregation, and unequal access to loadings and allowances continue to disadvantage women and gender diverse employees. Headline figures risk masking the pay inequity experienced by the majority of Melbourne Polytechnic's workforce.

Setting metrics

Critical performance measures:

- Mean total remuneration gender pay gap by occupation group.
- Mean total remuneration senior leader gender pay gap.

Supplementary measures:

- Median total remuneration pay gap.

Target

- By 2029, reduce the median total remuneration gender pay gap (level -2 and below) from 8.3% to 5.0% or below.

Strategies

Strategy	Responsible	Timeline
Strengthen use of Gender Pay Gap Calculator to identify and understand areas that require attention	People and Culture (Culture and Partnering)	2027 – 2029
Review pay equity in casual and feminised roles	People and Culture (Culture and Partnering)	2027 – 2029
Address structural drivers through job design	People and Culture (Culture and Partnering)	2027 – 2029

Indicator 4: Sexual harassment in the workplace

Analyse audit data

Critical performance measures:

- Anonymous experience rate of sexual harassment in 2025: Women 2.9%, men DU, self-described DU
- Number of formal reports of sexual harassment in 2025: All genders DU

Supplementary measures:

- Participants who said they reported sexual harassment in 2025: Women 10.0%, men DU, self-described DU
- Reasons for not making a formal sexual harassment complaint in 2025: All fields DU
- Satisfaction with handling of workplace sexual harassment complaint in 2025: All fields DU
- Satisfaction with handling of formal workplace sexual harassment complaint in 2025: All fields DU

The overall rate of sexual harassment at Melbourne Polytechnic remained stable at 4% across FY23 and FY25, with no formal complaints lodged in FY25. However, this masks disparities and systemic issues.

Gender diverse employees experienced sexual harassment five times the rate of women and men (15% compared to 3% for both groups). Employees with disability (5%) and sexually diverse employees (6%) also reported higher rates. Disparities are consistent across negative workplace behaviour: gender diverse employees experienced bullying at 15% and discrimination at 15%, while employees with disability reported bullying at 22% and discrimination at 11%.

The absence of formal sexual harassment complaints in FY25 does not necessarily signify a safe workplace. Only 4% of those who experienced harassment submitted a formal complaint, down from 13% in FY23. The most common reason for not reporting was not believing the incident was serious enough (57%), followed by concerns about reputational (22%) and career consequences (13%). 9% reported not feeling safe to report - up from 0% in FY23. Across bullying, the figures are higher: 60% who did not make a formal complaint believed it would not make a difference, and 29% did not feel safe to report, up from 9%.

Managers and supervisors were frequently identified as the source of harm: 48% of bullying cases, 61% of discrimination cases, and 16% of sexual harassment cases. This power dynamic can discourage reporting and undermine trust in accountability systems.

People Matter Survey results reinforce these patterns. While perceptions that the organisation encourages respectful behaviour are strong among women (83%) and men (78%), only 54% of gender diverse employees agreed. Confidence in the organisation's action is markedly lower for gender diverse employees, with only 31% agreeing that Melbourne Polytechnic takes steps to eliminate bullying, harassment and discrimination less than half the rate for women (66%) and men (67%). Employees with disability and gender diverse staff also reported lower confidence in their ability to challenge inappropriate behaviour (67% and 62% respectively).

Overall, although the number of respondents within some groups is small, the direction and consistency of the data across multiple indicators point to systemic issues affecting particular cohorts.

Problem statement:

Sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination continue to occur at Melbourne Polytechnic, with gender diverse employees and employees with disability reporting disproportionately higher harm, even within small sample sizes. Low formal reporting and reduced trust in organisational action, particularly where harm is linked to positions of authority, highlight the need to strengthen accountability, provide safer reporting options and deliver targeted prevention for the groups most affected.

Setting metrics

Critical performance measures:

- Anonymous experience rate of sexual harassment.
- Number of formal reports of sexual harassment.

Supplementary measures:

- Participants who said they reported sexual harassment.
- Reasons for not making a formal sexual harassment complaint.
- Satisfaction with handling of workplace sexual harassment complaint.
- Satisfaction with handling of formal workplace sexual harassment complaint.

Target

- By 2029, increase the proportion of staff who agree the organisation takes steps to eliminate bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination.

Strategies

Strategy	Responsible	Timeline
Develop trauma informed response protocols	People and Culture (Culture and Partnering)	2026

Increase transparency around complaint process and outcomes	People and Culture (Culture and Partnering)	2026
Deliver evidence-based bystander intervention training	People and Culture (Culture and Partnering)	2025 – 2029
Targeted capability development for people managers	People and Culture (Culture and Partnering)	2027 – 2029
Review reporting channels, flexible workplace policies and practices for equity	People and Culture (Culture and Partnering)	2026, 2028 and 2029
Consider dedicated support pathways	People and Culture (Culture and Partnering)	2028 and 2029
Develop a whole of organisation gender-based prevention and response plan	People and Culture (Culture and Partnering)	2026
Develop and implement communication and engagement campaigns on gender equality	People and Culture (Operations)	2025 – 2029

Indicator 5: Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace

Analyse audit data

Critical performance measures:

- Gender composition of recruited employees in 2025: Women 64.2%, men 33.1%, self-described 2.7%
- Gender composition of employees who were promoted in 2025: Women 51.1%, men 48.9%, self-described 0.0%
- Perceptions of recruitment, by gender in 2025: Women 66.3%, men 58.4%, self-described 76.9%
- Perceptions of promotion, by gender in 2025: Women 47.6%, men 44.9%, self-described 38.5%

Perceptions of fairness in both recruitment and promotion improved substantially across all groups between FY23 and FY25. Agreement that promotion processes are fair rose by 16 percentage points for women (to 48%) and 25 points for employees with disability (to 52%). Perceptions of recruitment fairness are stronger, with most groups now above 60% agreement. These are genuine gains that reflect positively on Melbourne Polytechnic's efforts to date.

Despite strong perceptions of fairness in recruitment, gender diverse employees reported the lowest agreement that promotion processes are fair (38%) and the lowest satisfaction with opportunities to progress (38%). Only 46% of gender diverse employees felt they had an equal chance at promotion. Employees with disability, while showing significant improvement, remain below other groups on most measures. Around half of all employees still do not perceive that they have genuine opportunities to progress - suggesting the challenge is systemic, not limited to specific groups.

Recruitment patterns suggest a structural issue. In FY25, 68% of women recruited were in casual roles, up from 55% in FY23, while recruitment into full-time ongoing positions fell from 21% to 17%. This means that while the gender composition of recruitment sits within the 40:40:20 band (64% women, 33% men, 3% self-described in FY25), the quality of that recruitment is gendered women are disproportionately entering insecure employment, with direct consequences for the pay gap (Indicator 3) and workforce segregation (Indicator 7).

Promotion data shows that no self-described employees received a permanent promotion in any reporting period. Career development training uptake has risen significantly (to 42% for women and 35% for men in FY25), and higher duties opportunities have increased for women. Yet this activity has not translated into confidence that advancement is genuinely accessible. Staff are learning in their roles (78% of women, 78% of men agreed) but do not feel this development connects to career progression — a gap between development and advancement that suggests structural barriers in succession planning and promotions rather than individual capability.

Problem statement:

Despite improvements in perceived fairness, gender diverse employees and employees with disability continue to experience lower confidence in promotion and progression. Women are disproportionately recruited into insecure employment, and development activity is not translating into trust that advancement is achievable. Structural barriers in recruitment quality and promotion pathways remain a key focus for the next GEAP cycle.

Setting metrics

Critical performance measures:

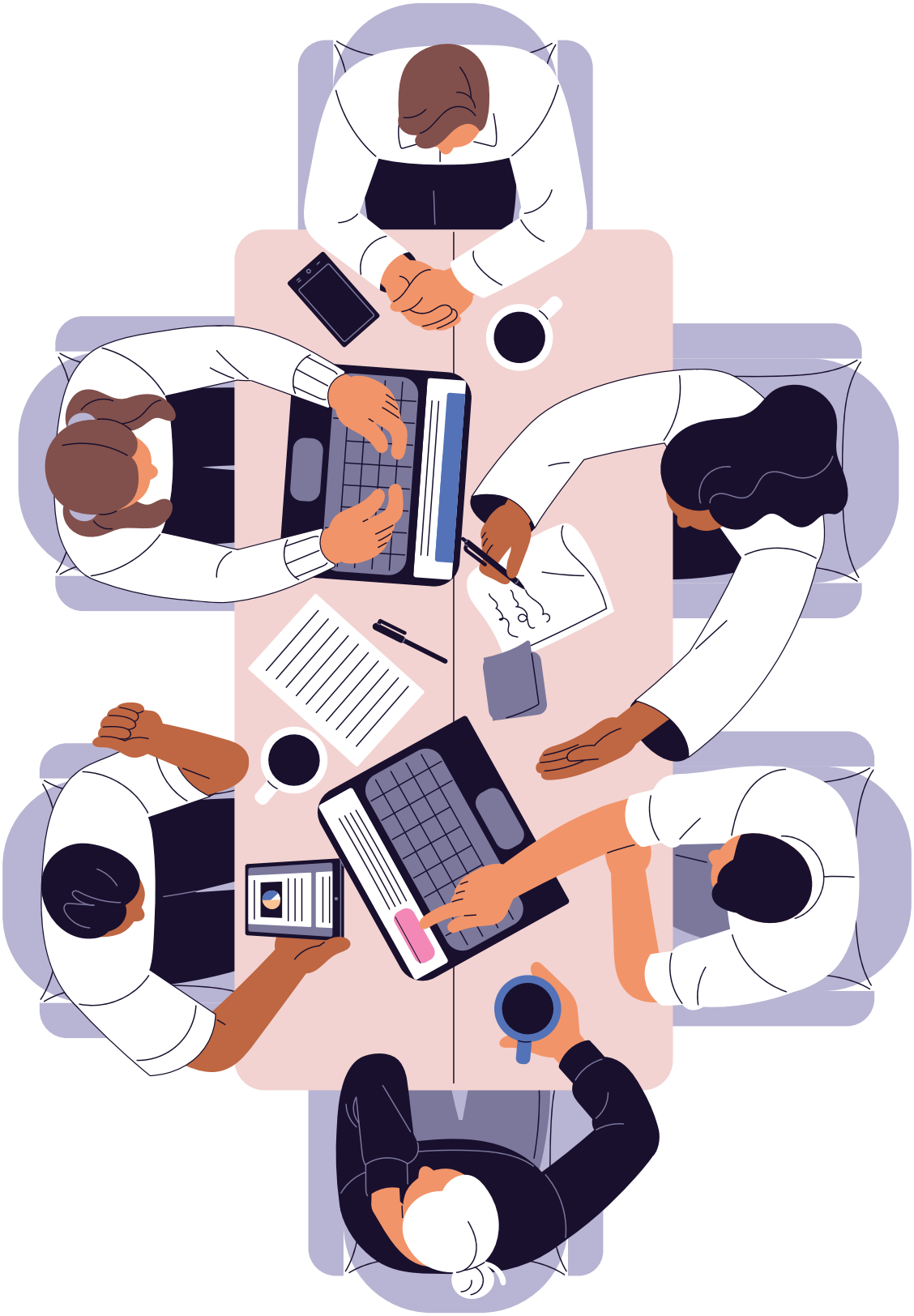
- Gender composition of recruited employees.
- Gender composition of employees who were promoted.
- Perceptions of recruitment, by gender.
- Perceptions of promotion, by gender.

Target

- By 2029, increase positive perceptions of promotion fairness to at least 55% for women and 55% for men, with no group below 45%.

Strategies

Strategy	Responsible	Timeline
Explore and implement ways to enhance career progression, including increasing the use of secondments as a development pathway	People and Culture (Operations)	2027
Mitigate opportunities for unconscious bias in recruitment and promotion processes	People and Culture (Operations)	2028 and 2029



Indicator 6: Availability and utilisation of terms, conditions and practices relating to: family violence leave, flexible working arrangements, and working arrangements supporting employees with family or caring responsibilities

Analyse audit data

Critical performance measures:

- Average weeks of parental leave, by gender in 2025: Women 36.5, men 1.5, self-described DU
- Uptake of flexible work, by gender in 2025: Women 9.5%, men 6.8%, self-described DU
- Perceptions of flexible work culture, by gender in 2025: Women 76.4%, men 69.8%, self-described 76.9%

Supplementary measures:

- Gender composition of parental leave takers in 2025: Women 83.3%, men 16.7%, self-described DU
- Gender gap in carer's leave in 2025: Women 22.3%, men 14.5%, self-described DU

Parental leave at Melbourne Polytechnic remains deeply gendered, a pattern consistent with national employment trends and long-standing societal norms around caring.

In FY25, 10 women and 2 men accessed parental leave, with women taking an average of 14.0 weeks paid and 26.7 weeks unpaid leave, compared to 1.5 weeks paid and zero weeks unpaid for men. Men's average parental leave has not shifted at all since FY23. Women's reliance on unpaid leave has grown substantially - from an average of 11.1 weeks in FY21 to 26.7 weeks in FY25 — with direct implications for their financial security, superannuation, and career continuity. The proportion of men among parental leave takers increased from 10.5% in FY23 to 16.7% in FY25, but the gap in leave duration remains large. Carer's leave follows a similar pattern, with 22% of women and 15% of men accessing this leave in FY25.

Formal flexible work uptake appears to have declined from 21% in FY21 to 8% in FY25, but this is likely due to Melbourne Polytechnic's limited tracking capability. There is no formal system for recording flexible working arrangements, and data currently depends on managers notifying People & Culture Business Partners. The absence of reliable data means the organisation cannot accurately assess accessibility, identify barriers or measure equity in practice. Improving flexible work data collection is therefore a necessary priority and is already included in current workplans.

Despite the data gap, perceptions of flexible work culture are improving. Confidence that a flexible work request would be considered rose to 76% for women and 70% for men. Manager support for flexible work is strong, with agreement above 80% for most groups. Notably, however, employees with disability saw confidence in having requests considered decline from 76% to 68%, and employees not currently using flexible work reported lower confidence (50%) than those already accessing it (86%).

Problem statement:

Parental leave and caring responsibilities remain overwhelmingly carried by women, reflecting broader societal norms that contribute to gendered financial insecurity and career interruption. Melbourne Polytechnic experiences these same patterns. The absence of reliable flexible work data limits the organisation's ability to identify and address access barriers. While perceptions of flexible work culture are improving, the lower confidence among employees not currently accessing flexibility and the declining confidence among employees with disability indicate that systemic barriers to genuinely equitable access remain.

Setting metrics

Critical performance measures

- Average weeks of parental leave, by gender.
- Uptake of flexible work, by gender.
- Perceptions of flexible work culture, by gender.

Supplementary measures

- Gender composition of parental leave takers.
- Gender gap in carer's leave.

Target

- By 2029, increase the proportion of men among parental leave takers to at least 25%.

Strategies

Strategy	Responsible	Timeline
Implement a formal system for tracking flexible work arrangements and types	People and Culture (Culture and Partnering)	2026
Review and promote flexible working arrangements policy	People and Culture (Culture and Partnering)	2026
Build manager capability to support flexible work	People and Culture (Culture and Partnering)	2027 – 2029
Promote flexibility, leave entitlements and caregiving through communications plan and leadership modelling	People and Culture (Culture and Partnering)	2028 and 2029
Apply an intersectional lens to flexibility policy and practice	People and Culture (Culture and Partnering)	2028 and 2029

Indicator 7: Gendered segregation within the workplace

Analyse audit data

Critical performance measures

Occupational gender segregation in 2025:

1. Managers: Women 52.5%, men 47.5 %, self-described DU
2. Professionals: Women 52.4%, men 47.1%, self-described 0.4%
3. Technicians and Trades Workers: Women 31.6%, men 68.4%, self-described DU
4. Community and Personal Service Workers: Women 67.6%, men 32.4%, self-described DU
5. Clerical and Administrative Workers: Women 75.4%, men 24.2%, self-described 0.3%
6. Sales Workers: Women 50.0%, men 50.0%, self-described DU
7. Machinery Operators and Drivers: Women 16.7%, men 83.3%, self-described DU
8. Labourers: all fields DU

Gendered occupational segregation at Melbourne Polytechnic has increased in several key areas between FY23 and FY25. Women's representation in Technicians and Trades Workers has declined from 35.9% to 31.6%, reversing earlier gains. Community and Personal Service roles have become more feminised (63.2% to 67.6%), and Clerical and Administrative roles remain strongly female-concentrated at 75.4%, despite a modest improvement. In contrast, Sales Workers reached gender parity, and both Managers and Professionals have maintained gender balance.

The decline in women's representation in trades roles is particularly notable within a TAFE context. As an institution responsible for training new entrants into traditionally male-dominated industries, Melbourne Polytechnic's workforce composition shapes the learning environment and influences who sees themselves as belonging in trades careers. A downward trend in women's representation may limit the pipeline of women entering the sector more broadly — a challenge common across the Australian VET sector.

Employment security compounds these patterns. In FY25, only 35.8% of women held full-time ongoing positions compared with 42.8% of men, and women's rate of casualisation increased from 35.4% to 41.2% over the reporting period. This indicates not only horizontal segregation (by occupation), but also vertical segregation (by employment security). These structural patterns directly influence the gender pay gap and intersect with barriers to career progression.

Intersectional analysis similarly shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, employees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and employees with disability remain concentrated at lower organisational levels, with limited representation in senior roles. This vertical segregation compounds gendered occupational patterns and reinforces systemic barriers to advancement.

Perceptions of fair work allocation remain strong across genders (83% of women and 81% of men), indicating that inequality is not occurring through day-to-day task distribution, but through deeper structural patterns in who occupies which roles and on what employment terms.

Problem statement:

Gendered occupational segregation is deepening in trades and caring roles, and women remain concentrated in less secure forms of employment. As a TAFE with a direct role in shaping workforce pipelines, Melbourne Polytechnic has both an obligation and a unique opportunity to model inclusive trades environments and address the structural drivers of segregation across its workforce.

Setting metrics

Critical performance measures

- Occupational gender segregation.

Target

- By 2029, restore and increase the proportion of women in Technicians and Trades Workers from 31.6% to at least 36%, returning to or exceeding the 2023 level.

Strategies

Strategy	Responsible	Timeline
Targeted recruitment and succession planning for male dominated roles*	People and Culture (Operations)	2028 and 2029
Address segregation in feminised roles	People and Culture (Operations)	2028 and 2029
Strategic recruitment of women into trades teaching roles	TBD	2027–2029
Mentorship and support for women in trades teaching roles	TBD	2027–2029
Model inclusive trades environments	TBD	2027–2029
Partner with specialist organisations on masculinities and prevention work	People and Culture (Culture and Partnering)	2025–2029
Address rigid gender norms in recruitment	People and Culture (Operations)	2028 and 2029

* Also in Indicator 1

F) Resourcing your GEAP

Section 13: Identifying current and required resources

The development of this GEAP has been guided by a deliberate and evidence-based process to ensure that resourcing is appropriately aligned with the strategies required to make reasonable and material progress against each Workplace Gender Equality Indicator.

A key learning from the previous GEAP cycle was the need for a more focused, achievable set of actions; this GEAP builds on that insight to strengthen impact and sustainability.

Melbourne Polytechnic engaged consultants from Women's Health in the South East and Women's Health East to support this work. Their role included:

- analysing the Workplace Gender Audit data
- providing information to support consultations on the audit findings
- analysing consultation outputs
- developing draft strategies to inform a second round of consultation
- supporting completion of relevant GEAP sections.

The consultants provided a comprehensive list of draft strategies, which formed the basis for a collaborative and iterative internal review. Through this process, Melbourne Polytechnic and the consultants worked together to confirm which strategies could be effectively delivered within existing resourcing, and which could be aligned with related work in the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan. This ensured both plans remain mutually reinforcing and efficiently implemented. One additional strategy was incorporated into Indicator 4 to reflect ongoing business-as-usual activity.

Overall, this GEAP places strong emphasis on ensuring that proposed strategies are not only evidence-informed and targeted to gender inequality, but also realistic, sustainable and positioned for successful implementation. The result is a balanced, achievable set of actions that builds on organisational strengths, aligns with existing frameworks, and supports continued progress in gender equality.

Section 14: Developing a resourcing plan

Melbourne Polytechnic has adopted an integrated approach to gender equality, with resourcing drawn from multiple teams across the organisation.

This reflects the understanding that progressing gender equity is not the responsibility of a single unit, but relies on coordinated effort, distributed expertise and shared accountability across the institution.

To lead the development and implementation of both the Gender Equality Action Plan (FY26-FY29) and the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (2026-2028), Melbourne Polytechnic has allocated 1.4 EFT within the Culture and Partnering team in People & Culture. While an indicative allocation of 40% of this time will be dedicated to the GEAP, 40% to the D&I Action Plan, and 20% to related governance and reporting, in practice the two plans are closely aligned. Many strategies overlap or reinforce each other and will be implemented concurrently. For example, a D&I Plan action on inclusive recruitment (scheduled for 2028) will draw on four GEAP strategies related to recruitment practices, succession planning and gendered segregation (Indicators 5 and 7).

Although the Culture and Partnering team leads much of this work, gender equality resourcing is embedded across Melbourne Polytechnic. Several teams contribute directly to GEAP strategy delivery:

- Professional Teaching Practice team - supporting actions related to capability building, inclusive teaching practice and trades-based gender equity
- Governance team - supporting GEAP governance, reporting and policy integration
- People and Culture Operations team - contributing to recruitment process improvements, workforce data collection, policy implementation and procedural updates.

Several strategies fall under the remit of the Inclusion Respect and Equality Taskforce, particularly those aligned with:

- Melbourne Polytechnic's obligations under the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence (Indicator 4), and
- Work to strengthen support for women, gender diverse staff and girls in male-dominated trades pathways (Indicator 7).

Budgets for these strategies are determined through existing work programs overseen by the responsible units and as part of annual business and budget planning.

Oversight of resourcing and progress occurs at multiple levels. The Director, People and Culture supervises the Culture and Partnering team, monitors completion of GEAP strategies and assesses resourcing implications. The People Committee and the Melbourne Polytechnic Board receive regular updates on GEAP and D&I Plan progress. The Board is committed to ensuring the GEAP is appropriately supported and resourced, recognising gender equality as a strategic priority for the organisation. The Inclusion Respect and Equality Taskforce receives annual updates on progress toward gender equality, including at least biennial reporting on the Workplace Gender Equality Indicators, and provides oversight regarding resourcing needs and alignment across related initiatives.

In addition to the resources outlined above, Melbourne Polytechnic has embedded organisational support through:

- 1.0 EFT responsible for workforce data collection and analysis, including the Workplace Gender Audit
- 1.0 EFT responsible for Culture and Values and the People Matter Survey.

These ongoing positions form part of the infrastructure that supports GEAP delivery, evidence-based decision-making and organisational cultural improvement.

MP is also committing funds to a broader strategic approach to support women in trades, as well as localised programs within our Trade departments.

Any other additions or comments

As indicated above, Melbourne Polytechnic has developed its first consolidated Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, and gender equity actions are included as a section in that plan, along with strengthening core systems, racial equity actions, access and inclusion (disability and neurodiversity), and LGBTIQA+ actions. The implementation of the GEAP is included as one item under the gender equity section, thereby creating the architecture where the D&I Plan is the overarching document. Additionally, the D&I Plan calls up a number of transformative projects, most of which will incorporate GEAP strategies in their implementation. This alignment will ensure that the GEAP work is coherent and aligned with other change initiatives.

Information correct at October 2026 © MELBOURNE POLYTECHNIC

MELBOURNE POLYTECHNIC

TAFE VICTORIA

National Provider No. 3075 | CRICOS Provider 00724G |4815|MP|021026|