



Ten ways local government can advance gender equity

Workplaces

The fact sheets, *Ten ways local government can advance gender equity*, are part of a resource package designed to build the capacity for local governments to consider gender equity in their planning, policy and service delivery.

Local government plays an important role in creating and supporting environments that enable community to achieve optimal health and wellbeing. Reducing gender inequity for women is a key strategy in achieving this goal, as it allows for a more just, inclusive and fair society for both women and men. The fact sheets include practical information and practice examples of ways local government can advance gender equity for women.

The ten fact sheets are:

1. Why gender matters
2. Gender analysis
3. Infrastructure
4. Land use planning and design
5. Promoting women in leadership
6. Workplaces
7. Sports and recreation
8. Access to services
9. Key concepts and definitions
10. Further resources

Why focus on gender equity in the workplace?

Over the last decade, there has been a significant increase in women's paid employment. However, workplace attitudes and assumptions that lead to discrimination and unequal outcomes between women and men continue. For example, a major contributor to unequal outcomes between women and men is the gender wage gap. Australian women currently earn approximately 82 cents to every dollar men earn, and the gender pay gap has widened over the last four years.¹ A 2009 report commissioned by the federal government found that in addition to fairness and equity there are strong economic imperatives for rectifying the pay gap between women and men, as it costs the Australian economy \$93 billion per year.² Another common reason that women and a growing number of men struggle to stay in work is because employees who have family and caring responsibilities are not adequately supported through flexible work arrangements.³ Even when flexible workplace provisions are available unsupportive workplace cultures prevent many workers – particularly men – from accessing such entitlements.⁴

Why should local government work to create a gender equitable workplace?

Local government employs a wide range of professionals from those working in planning, health and community services, sports and leisure, infrastructure and human resources, among various other professions.

Supporting fair and more flexible workplaces is essential in advancing gender equity and in positioning local government as an employer of choice. In practice, this means that both women and men are provided with family friendly employment conditions, job quality, pay equity, satisfaction with hours worked and career progression. Flexible workplace initiatives have been found to increase employee productivity and improve recruitment and retention of staff.⁶ Flexible workplace arrangements also support good health among employees, which is essential to workplace productivity.

How can local government promote gender equity in the workplace?

There are numerous ways local government can advance workplace reform and organisational cultural change in an effort to build a fair, flexible and gender equitable workplace. These include:

- Invest in workplace innovation and job redesign to strengthen opportunities for women to take on leadership and management roles
- Set measurable targets for the number of women at management and senior executive roles

Local government innovation to advance gender equity in the workplace

Family violence is a leading cause of homelessness and poverty for Victorian women and children, as violence in the home has a significant impact on women's employment status. Recognising this, the Surf Coast Shire has incorporated a clause in their Enterprise Agreement that provides employees experiencing family violence with additional paid leave and occupational health and safety measures, including safety planning.¹¹

- Work to achieve pay equity between women and men and put in place measures that promote greater transparency in relation to pay rates and individual contracts
- Ensure that women and men working at all levels of council can access flexible workplace arrangements, such as flexi-time, part-time work, job sharing and working from home options
- Provide fathers and other supporting parents with a minimum of two weeks' paid leave following the birth of a baby to enable them to be involved in caring for their child
- Support employees returning to work after parental leave, such as provisions that allow women to return to part-time employment, private workplace areas for employees to breastfeed or express milk at work
- Identify and support men working in senior roles to champion gender equity in the workplace through leading by example and accessing flexible work arrangements.

Gender inequity facts

FACT: In a week where 3.2 million employees provided unpaid care to someone, only 15 per cent used flexible working arrangements to do so⁷

FACT: Lower income earners (less than \$30,000 pa) are more likely to require greater job flexibility when compared to middle and higher income earners⁸

FACT: Women are more likely than men to work under minimum employment conditions and be employed in low-paid, casual and part-time work⁹

FACT: One in five women will experience sexual harassment in the workplace in their lifetime, which remains a barrier for many women participating in paid work.¹⁰

Superannuation and Women

- In 09/10 the average account balance for women was \$40,000. Men? Over \$71,000
- A woman taking a five year break at 27 to have children has \$91,400 less superannuation than a man
- A woman who retires at 67 needs 13% more in retirement than a man because she is likely to live longer
- About two in five women have no superannuation compared with one in four men
- Average superannuation payouts for women are less than half that received by men – \$63,000 compared with \$136,000.⁵

¹ ABS. Average Weekly Earnings, November 2010, Cat No. 6306, 2010.

² R. Cassells, Y. Vodyattama, R. Miranti & J. McNamara. *The Impact of a Sustained Gender Wage Gap on the Australian Economy*, Commonwealth of Australian: Canberra, 2009.

³ Australian Human Rights Commission. *Gender Equality Blueprint*, Australian Human Rights Commission: Sydney, 2010

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ R. Clare, *The Age Pension, Superannuation and Australian Retirement Incomes*, 2009, p. 22. Available at <http://www.superannuation.asn.au/policy/reports-2007-09>

⁶ L. Long, *Creating a Flexible Workplace*, Society for Human Resource Management, 2008.

⁷ ABS. Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation, Australia, April to July 2007, Catalogue No. 6361.0, 2007.

⁸ Newspoll Market Research, *Out of Hours Care Study*, 2008.

⁹ ABS. 'Table 03: Labour Force Status by Sex', Labour Force Australia, Catalogue No 6202.0, 2008.

¹⁰ Australian Human Rights Commission. *Sexual Harassment: Serious Business Results of the 2008 Sexual Harassment National Telephone Survey*, 2008, p. 1. Available at http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sexualharassment/serious_business

¹¹ J. Kun, 'The ASU's Family Violence Clause: Making Family Violence a Workplace Issues', *Parity*, vol. 23, issue 10, December 2010.