



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Gender Equality Action Plan 2017 - 2020



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Background

Balancing the Future: Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2016-19 (the Strategy) sets out actions on changing culture through leadership, flexibility and innovation. It focuses on driving high performance and boosting productivity in the Australian Public Service (APS). The Strategy is one of several actions to support the Government's G20 commitment to reduce the gender gap in workforce participation by 25 per cent by 2025.

The Secretaries Equality and Diversity Council has committed each agency to developing a Gender Equality Action Plan (Action Plan). This Action Plan aligns with the APS Strategy and is informed by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's (WGEA) diagnostic tool. The Action Plan builds on the Department's existing framework and commitment to diversity and inclusion, enhancing our existing gender equality and culture where all employees are able to receive and enjoy the same rewards, resources and opportunities regardless of their gender identity. Women are strongly represented across the social services sector and DSS's workforce reflects this for both APS and SES employees, confirming our ability to foster equitable and high performing workplaces.

Assessment against the WGEA Gender Equality Diagnostic Tool

In October 2016, the Department assessed itself against the WGEA Gender Equality Diagnostic Tool, achieving a total score of 43 out of a possible 60, with an aggregate score of four – **Integrated** on the **Gender Equality Roadmap**. Organisations in the Integrated phase can demonstrate that gender equality is internalised within their systems:

- Gender equality best practice is integrated in business and people policies and processes
- The business case for gender equality is understood and embraced at all organisational levels
- Commitment to and investment in gender equality progress is unaffected by business challenges
- Structural and cultural barriers to female career progression are actively challenged and addressed

DSS general equality maturity was assessed across 12 key focus areas on the Gender Equality Roadmap:

Gender Equality Roadmap		
Focus area	Roadmap phase	Roadmap signposts
Policy and Processes	Sustainable	Gender equality objectives are fully embedded within business and people policies and processes rather than standing alone.
Gender pay equity		Pay policy design and practice is transparent and bias-free and gender-equitable reward is a business and cultural norms.
Talent Pipeline		Access to development is gender-equitable for employees at all levels, talent is fully leveraged irrespective of gender.
Gender inclusive culture		A gender equitable and inclusive culture is intuitive to all employees and defines how all business and work is conducted.
Measurement and Reporting	Integrated	Gender equality/diversity metrics form part of routine management information which informs leadership action planning
Stakeholder Engagement	Strategic	A full range of gender equality stakeholders (male and female, internal and external) is identified during strategy development.
Leadership Accountability		Senior leadership team recognises the need for gender equality action and actively communicates its role in driving progress against clear metrics.
Strategy and Business Case		The value of the gender strategy based on a credible business case has been recognised and developed.
Gender composition		Team and overall workforce gender composition is monitored as are business and people process outcomes by gender.

Flexibility		Flexible work and family-friendly policies/practices are designed and accessible to benefit all employees; the flexibility business case is established.
Leader and Manager Capability	Programmatic	Individual development addresses specific gender equality needs as they arise and focuses on knowledge rather than skills.
Supply Chain		Promotion of gender equality through procurement/supply chain practices is limited to specific vendor types (eg. recruiters) and ad hoc tender responses.

Purpose and priority areas

The purpose of the Action Plan is to contribute to the Government’s G20 commitment to reduce the gender gap in workforce participation. In doing so, the Action Plan outlines our program of activities to achieve the Department’s Gender Equality goals.

DSS will focus on maintaining and improving its maturity in areas where gender equality is already integrated in its people, policy and culture. Effort in the Action Plan will concentrate on the WGEA roadmap phases of Strategic and Programmatic. Conscious and deliberate effort in these areas is likely to yield significant results.

The DSS Action Plan sets out a range of goals and actions to reinforce our Department’s commitment to diversity and gender equality. As a result, the priority areas for DSS within the Action Plan are:

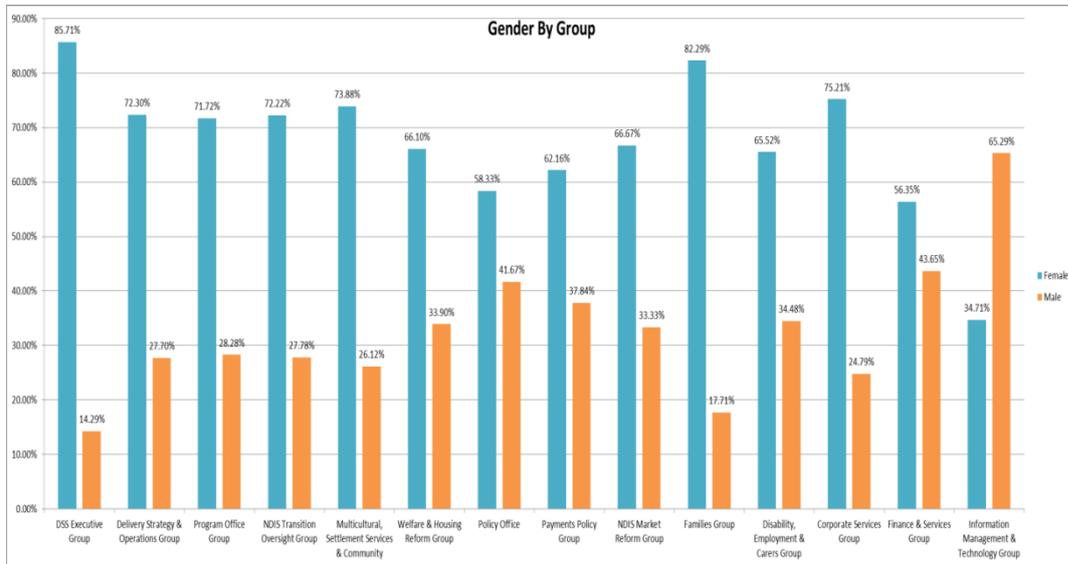
- Developing the capability of leaders and managers to embed gender equality across teams and business units
- Demonstrating the Department’s commitment to gender equality when procuring its goods and services
- Sustaining a gender inclusive culture, including through senior level promotion of the business case for equality
- Promoting flexible work arrangements regardless of classification and gender
- Meeting stretch gender-based diversity targets
- Maintaining our gender profile across all business areas and gender balance in leadership roles
- Developing more diverse employment practices.

Current State

The Department is already a leader in the APS and performs well in gender equality.

As at 31 January 2017, within DSS:

- 67 per cent of DSS staff are women
- 53 per cent of DSS senior executive service leaders are women
- There is reasonable pay equity across APS workforce as a consequence of the APS remuneration structures and DSS Enterprise Agreement
- SES pay rates are marginally higher overall for males than females (\$183,593 compared to \$179,949). However the average pay rate is slightly higher for females in the SES Band 2 cohort (\$240,109 compared to \$239,664) and the SES Band 3 cohort
- Women slightly outnumber men (55 per cent to 45 per cent) in financial services roles
- Women make up one third (35 per cent) of the DSS Information Management Technology workforce
- 20 per cent of the DSS APS workforce and 2 per cent of SES access part-time arrangements, with 86 per cent of staff who access these arrangements being women
- 72 per cent of women identify as having carer responsibilities, which is significantly above the rate of men at 28 per cent
- The Department's separation rate of 15.38 per cent is similar for both women and men
- Census data indicates that women are slightly more engaged (61 per cent) than men (59 per cent) with their work, team, supervisor and agency
- Gender representation by organisational structure is detailed in the graph below, with only one Group showing a lower female to male ratio



DSS Gender Equality Action Plan

Goal	Action Item	Sub actions	Timeframe to complete	Area Responsible
Leadership and Workplace culture	Promote and raise awareness of the importance and benefits of gender equality as a business priority	Executive endorsed communication campaigns to support the principles of the APS Gender Equality Strategy and DSS Action Plan.	Q1 2017	EMG
		Provide toolkit for Senior Managers and supervisors to promote the benefits of an inclusive workplace and Departmental initiatives by June 2017.	Q2 2017	CSG/all senior managers
		Support our portfolio agencies to establish and monitor gender equality initiatives by December 2017.	Q2 2017	EMG
		Review corporate policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the Department's gender equality commitment by December 2017.	Q4 2017	CSG/WCF
	Ensure consistent, supportive, and respectful approaches for the safety of employees and their workplaces	Provide training to managers to recognise and respond appropriately to employees, including utilising leave provisions by June 2017.	Q2 2017	CSG/all managers
		Improve policies relating to domestic and family violence and communication of those policies to employees by June 2017.	Q2 2017	CSG
		Establish web based resources relating to domestic violence information and supports by June 2017.	Q2 2017	CSG
	Establish a Gender Equality Network	Allocation of support for the Gender Equality Network in the Departmental budget.	Q2 2017	EMG
		Nominate SES Gender Equality Champions – female and male representation	Q2 2017	EMG
		Promote Gender Equality Network	Q2 2017	EMG/SMG
Gender Equality in Leadership	Maintain our gender profile across all leadership levels and business areas over the life of the Strategy.	Utilise established mechanisms to monitor gender ratios for all business areas to ensure current profiles are maintained.	Q4 2017	All managers
		Develop targeted programs to address gender imbalance in those areas where it has yet to be achieved.	Q2 2017	Group Managers

Goal	Action Item	Sub actions	Timeframe to complete	Area Responsible
	Ensure gender balance when nominating Departmental representation.	DSS Executive commit to the Panel Pledge which requires them to only participate as panellists/speakers in those events where women are participating in a meaningful way; and establish a communication campaign	Q1 2017	EMG
		Use and maintain a Board Representation Register.	Q3 2017	CSG
			Q3 2017	CSG
	Ensure opportunities for leadership and career progression regardless of gender over the life of the Strategy.	Provide specialised leadership and career development programs that support the progression of women and men into senior leadership roles.	Q3 2017	EMG/ all managers
		Use mechanisms in recruitment campaigns and selection processes that address unconscious bias	Q2 2017	All selection panel members and recruitment delegates
		Develop SES exchange programs for functional areas affected by gender balance	Q3 2017	EMG
Innovate for Gender Equality and Diversity in employment practices	Develop and promote a 'think differently, work differently' approach to our personnel practices.	Review retention, development and performance management practices to identify areas for innovation in personnel practices	Q4 2017	CSG
		Ensure gender and diversity balance on recruitment selection panels	Q1 2017	All selection panel members and recruitment delegates
		Develop a digital strategy that supports flexible working arrangements	Q3 2017	CSG
		Research and develop strategies to assist staff with caring responsibilities in terms of career progression and retirement income.	Q3 2017	CSG, informed by policy areas
		30 per cent of staff to participate in relevant APSC training	Q4 2017	All managers

Goal	Action Item	Sub actions	Timeframe to complete	Area Responsible
	Collaborate with the APSC and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency	Meet the criteria of the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's 'Employer of Choice for Gender Equality' citation	Q4 2019	EMG/CSG
		Work with NGO partners and suppliers to embed gender equality practices	Q4 2019	Program Office/Finance and Services Group
	Expand and promote flexible work arrangements.	Promote examples and benefits of flexible work arrangements which challenge assumptions about how work should be done and how jobs are designed	Q4 2017	All managers
		Adopt a 'flexible by default' approach and appropriate supports for managers	Q4 2017	All managers
		Profile male and female SES or Senior Managers who currently work flexibly to encourage uptake across the Department	Q4 2017	CSG
		Review framework for working parents to encourage men to use parental leave provisions	Q4 2017	CSG/ all managers
	Gender Equality and Diversity Stretch Targets	Establish and meet gender equality and diversity stretch targets across all levels and business areas over the life of the Strategy.	Increase female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation at the SES level.	Q4 2019
Increase percentage of women at SES Band 2 level from 43 per cent to 50 per cent.			Q4 2019	EMG
Maintain an equal representation of gender for culturally and linguistically diverse SES.			Q4 2019	EMG
Increase male staff with disability representation at the SES level.			Q4 2019	EMG
Increase awareness of supply chain practices and procurement requirements under the Workplace Gender Equality Act by annual advertising and ensure 100% compliance of tender documentation.			Q4 2019	Finance and Services Group
Monitor and maintain non-SES gender ratios for all business areas to ensure current profiles are maintained.			Q4 2019	All managers

Goal	Action Item	Sub actions	Timeframe to complete	Area Responsible
		Increase the representation of women in Information Management and Technology	Q4 2019	IMTG

Measurement and evaluation

The effectiveness of the Department's gender equality initiatives will be measured regularly to allow for the actions to be reviewed and updated as they are completed.

Action Item	Sub actions	Responsibility
Monitor and evaluate gender equality initiatives and ratios across all classifications, business areas and board representation.	Quarterly analysis of workforce metrics.	EMG/CSG
	Analysis of APSC State of Service Survey results	EMG/CSG
	Analysis of uptake of flexible work arrangements, including parental leave, by men and women	EMG
Report on progress of this Action Plan and other gender equality initiatives	Biannual Report to DSS' Executive Management Group	EMG/CSG
	Provide relevant data to APSC as required.	CSG
	Provide data relating to agency and individual board representation to the Office for Women for the annual Gender Balance on Australian Boards Report and as requested.	CSG
Evaluate organisational culture towards gender equity and address issues and review policies and procedures as required	Quarterly analysis of workforce metrics.	EMG/CSG
	Analysis of APSC State of Service Survey results	EMG/CSG
	Analysis of diversity audit by June 2017.	EMG/CSG

Glossary – Attachment A

Diversity	In the workplace, diversity means having employees from a range of backgrounds. This can include having employees of different ages, gender, ethnicity, physical ability, sexual orientation, religious belief, work experience, educational background, and so on.
Equality	Equality is achieved when people are able to access and enjoy the same rewards, resources and opportunities regardless of their background.
*Sex and Gender	<p>Sex refers to the chromosomal, gonadal and anatomical characteristics associated with biological sex.</p> <p>Gender is part of a person’s personal and social identity. It refers to the way a person feels, presents and is recognised within the community. A person’s gender may be reflected in outward social markers, including their name, outward appearance, mannerisms and dress.</p> <p>A person’s sex and gender may not necessarily be the same. Some people may identify as a different gender to their birth sex and some people may identify as neither exclusively male nor female.</p>
Inclusive workplace	An inclusive workplace is one where diversity is embraced and everyone can succeed in achieving their personal and professional goals.
Diversity audit	A diversity audit is a review of an organisation’ workplace culture and employment practices.

* Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender