



Greater Bendigo Coalition Gender Equity Strategy

A shared gender equity framework
2020–2025







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Acknowledgement of Country

The Coalition for Gender Equity acknowledges that Greater Bendigo is located on Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Country. It acknowledges and extends its appreciation to the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples, the Traditional Owners of the land upon which the people of Greater Bendigo reside.

The Coalition pays its respects to leaders and Elders past, present and emerging for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and the hopes of all Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung People. The Coalition expresses gratitude in the sharing of this land, sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing and hope that together we may walk forward together in harmony and in the spirit of healing.



INTRODUCTORY LETTER

On behalf of the Greater Bendigo Coalition for Gender Equity, it is our pleasure to introduce the first Gender Equity Strategy for Greater Bendigo. This is a significant community achievement and one that we are very proud to support as the strategy builds momentum and the Coalition's engagement continues to grow in our community.

Gender equity is the process of being fair to everyone, whether they identify as male, female or gender diverse and leads to gender equality. By working together, we ensure that we can all participate in our community with equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities. With gender equity, the community will be healthier; all people's needs will be considered in decision making, policy development and in leadership, and violence against women and children will be reduced. We all benefit.

The Greater Bendigo Coalition for Gender Equity was formed in 2018. The Coalition represents a diverse cross-section of the community with 32 organisations and groups (as at May 2020) in the private, public and community sector working together to advance gender equity and prevent violence against women. The Coalition has a broad and extensive reach in Greater Bendigo with member organisations employing over 8,000 staff with direct and regular contact with the community through the delivery of core programs, services and facilities. These organisations, from the local library to the corporate bank, are working together towards a fair and equitable community for us all.

The Coalition has developed this strategy to help guide its collective work over the next five years. The strategy identifies structural change, relational change and attitudinal change as key objectives and will focus the Coalition's work across six priority settings;

- workplaces,
- education,
- community,
- health,
- sport and recreation and
- emergency management.

The Coalition will work in action groups alongside community members to enact social change. As a collective unit rather than in isolation, the Greater Bendigo Coalition for Gender Equity will strengthen our existing efforts and help bring about the social change required to achieve and sustain gender equality.

We are all in this together. We are all responsible.

Please join us in this vital work.

Margaret O'Rourke
Mayor, City of Greater Bendigo

Tricia Currie
CEO, Women's Health Loddon Mallee



1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 About Gender Equity

Gender equity is the process of being fair to everyone, whether they identify as male, female or gender diverse. Gender equity recognises that within all communities, people of different genders have varying benefits, access to power, resources and responsibilities. To ensure fairness, strategies are required to respond to historical and existing social structures and create an equal playing field.

Gender equity leads to gender equality, where there are equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all.

While gender equality is a fundamental human right, it also carries enormous benefits for organisations, economies and improves overall living standards globally. The World Economic Forum recognises that “people and their talents are among the core drivers of sustainable, long-term economic growth. If half of these talents are underdeveloped or underutilised, growth and sustainability will be compromised.”¹

From an economic viewpoint, gender equality in Australia has been directly linked to increased national productivity, economic growth, organisational performance and reputation, and an improved ability of workplaces to attract and retain talent.² The rise of female participation in the labour force since the 1970s has boosted Australian economic activity by 22% and it is projected that if the current labour force participation gap were halved, Australia’s annual GDP would rise by AUD\$60billion in twenty years.³

Gender inequality and its impacts also pose a significant burden to the Australian economy. The impact of violence against women and children to the Australian economy in 2015-2016 was an estimated \$22billion.⁴

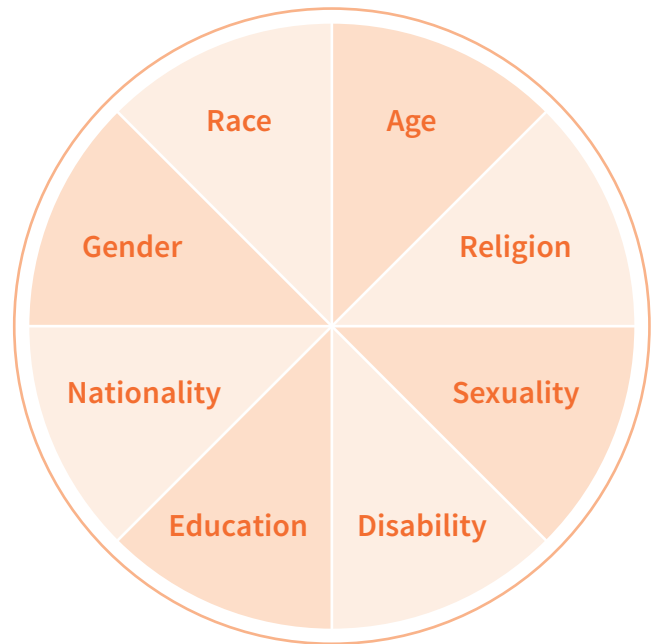
Achieving gender equality is core to preventing violence against women and children. OurWatch⁵, Australia’s leading primary prevention agency, produced a landmark report which identified four characteristics of gender inequality that drive violence against women:

- Rigid gender roles and identities
- Condoning, trivialising, minimising or excusing violence against women
- Men’s control of decision-making and limits to women’s independence
- Disrespect towards women and male peer relations that emphasise aggression

While gender inequality and violence against women and children exist within our community, we are all responsible in addressing this social issue so that everyone can live in safety, free to participate in all aspects of community life.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the understanding that gender is one component of our identity and intersects with other factors such as age, race, ability and sexuality to form an overall sense of identity. Intersectional discrimination is when people experience discrimination in multiple areas simultaneously, leading to a heightened sense of exclusion and disadvantage. For example, women and girls with disabilities are twice as likely as women and girls without disabilities to experience violence throughout their lives.⁶



1.2 Gender Equity and Greater Bendigo

Gender inequity is a pervasive social issue across Australia and the rest of the world. People from all walks of life are affected irrespective of their socio-economic status, level of education, age bracket, employment status, ethnicity or religious affiliation. Greater Bendigo is not immune to this social issue and research has found that quality of life is experienced differently according to gender even within our local context.

In Greater Bendigo, women contribute more significantly to unpaid domestic work than men with a quarter of women spending 15+ hours a week on these activities compared to a tenth of men. Women are more than twice as likely to work part time to juggle unpaid domestic and caring responsibilities and consequently almost half (45%) of employed women earn below

the weekly minimum wage.⁷ Women are twice as likely to feel unsafe walking alone at night⁸ and abandon their walking or cycling journey for safety concerns⁹, impacting their participation in sport and recreational activities and use of public spaces. Women in Greater Bendigo experience family violence at three times the rate of males and sexual violence at eight times the rate of males, putting them at higher risk of inequality and violence than many of their female counterparts across the State.¹⁰ These statistics align with a report by the Australian Human Rights Commission which found that women in rural and regional areas are more likely to experience disadvantage and discrimination in the workplace and society more broadly than women who are located in urban areas.¹¹

Gender inequity affects men too, in different ways. Rigid gender norms and perceptions of what it means to be a 'real man' are social pressures affecting men's overall health and wellbeing. An Australian study has shown that young men who comply with social pressures to act like a 'real man' report poorer mental health, are twice as likely to consider suicide and are more likely to be subject to and engage in bullying and violence.¹² The Federal National Men's Health Strategy acknowledges the influence of gender on men's health and prioritises reducing the stigma among males associated with health-care, ill-health and help-seeking.¹³ A recent report estimates that 72% of males do not seek help for mental ill-health.¹⁴ This stigma associated with accessing health-care and support for physical and mental illness is a contributing factor to higher rates of premature mortality, substance abuse and suicide among men.¹⁵ The National Men's Health Strategy recognises that one of the barriers to improving men's health is the lack of research into the gender inequality issues facing men and boys.¹⁶

The way gender inequity affects gender diverse people is an emerging area of research. Although there is more understanding to be gained, gender diverse people often experience social isolation, discrimination and exclusion from their family due to ignorance around gender diversity. As a result of this discrimination, gender diverse people experience high levels of anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicide.¹⁷





1.3 The Greater Bendigo Coalition for Gender Equity

The Greater Bendigo Coalition for Gender Equity was established in 2018 and is a diverse collective of 32 organisations and groups (as at May 2020) in the public, private and community sector dedicated to advancing gender equity and the prevention of violence against women in Greater Bendigo. The Coalition has a broad and extensive reach in Greater Bendigo with member organisations employing over 8,000 staff with direct and regular contact with the community through the delivery of core programs, services and facilities. The Coalition has a diverse membership including Victoria Police, Goldfields Library Corporation, Bendigo and Adelaide Bank, AFL Central Victoria, La Trobe University, Bendigo Health, City of Greater Bendigo, Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal Clans Corporation, Department of Health and Human Services, Belgravia Leisure, Women's Health Loddon Mallee and Centre for Non-Violence. These organisations recognise that by working together as a collective unit rather than in isolation, they are able to strengthen their existing efforts and help bring about the societal change required to achieve and sustain gender equality. Their commitment to this aim was demonstrated in a Coalition Leadership Statement released to the public in March 2019, outlining the purpose, vision and desired outcomes of their collective impact approach.

Coalition vision statement:

"A community where all people are respected, safe to participate in all aspects of community life and have equitable access to the resources they need to succeed in achieving their aspirations, whilst living in a community that is free from violence against women."

Through this collective impact approach, the Coalition is working towards seeing gender equality become the new norm in Greater Bendigo. The Coalition believes these outcomes will indicate Greater Bendigo is a gender equitable community:

- Women and children live in safety, free from violence
- Images and language used in the public domain will not stereotype women, men or people who are gender diverse
- Women, men and people who are gender diverse will participate equally in sport and the arts and will enjoy equal access to the same facilities and opportunities
- The built environment will be welcoming and safe for all genders
- Our workplaces and community governance structures will reflect the gender diversity of our community at all levels.
- There will be equal pay for equal roles and responsibilities
- Career development and promotion opportunities will be offered equally to all genders
- Flexible working arrangements will be equally available and taken up regardless of gender
- There will be no traditional gendered job or study stereotypes
- Career expectations will be gender neutral
- Caring responsibilities and unpaid domestic work will be shared equally
- People of all ages will support gender equality



1.4 The Case for a Gender Equity Strategy



A Gender Equity Strategy provides a framework to guide the work of current and prospective Coalition members and build the structures and processes to support and coordinate alignment of effort. A collective strategy allows the Coalition to measure and monitor progress towards a more gender equitable Greater Bendigo whilst remaining accountable for this progress to the broader community.

The development of a strategy also aligns the work of the Coalition with current state and national strategies and initiatives, allowing the Coalition to benefit from this coordinated approach while delivering initiatives suited to its unique local context.

1.5 Current Australian Policy Context

How this strategy sits within the federal, state, regional and local landscape

This strategy builds on a series of measures to address gender inequality within Australian social systems and structures that have gradually been introduced since the 1970s.¹⁸ It sits within an existing framework of federal and state strategies to achieve gender equality and the prevention of violence against women within the local context of Greater Bendigo.

At the federal level, there is specific legislation aimed at promoting gender equality for women and men in the workplace. The Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 requires all organisations in the private sector with over 100 employees to publish annual reports on their organisation's performance against a suite of gender equality indicators. The Equal Opportunity Act 2010, Fair Work Act 2009 and Sex Discrimination Act 1984 are also current acts of legislation that together form the legislative framework promoting gender equality in Australian workplaces.

The Council of Australian Governments endorsed a National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Children¹⁹ to see a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and children. Under the National Plan, the Commonwealth Government funded five national initiatives to drive long-term societal change; OurWatch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS); 1800 RESPECT; DV-Alert and Stop it at the Start.

At the state level, Victoria has invested unprecedented resources to tackle family violence and introduced legislation to achieve gender equality within public sector workplaces, the first of its kind in Australia. The Gender Equality Act 2020 complements the Workplace Gender Equality Act in requiring the public sector with fifty or more employees to take positive action toward gender equality and publish regular reports on their progress to a Gender Equality Commissioner.

The Government also conducted Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence which consequently led to the investment of \$2.7billion to resource the implementation of all 227 recommendations made by the Commission. The Government's Safe and Strong Strategy and Free From Violence Action Plan help guide the implementation of this work.

At the regional level, Loddon Mallee has the second highest regional incidence of reported family violence in Victoria.²⁰ A Loddon Mallee Action Plan was developed to coordinate efforts across the region to reduce levels of family violence. Regional Family Violence forums, Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Groups and Primary Care Partnerships are all examples of organisations and groups working in collaboration to promote gender equity and prevent violence against women in Loddon Mallee.

At the local level, the Greater Bendigo Coalition for Gender Equity formalised existing relationships between 32 organisations and groups (as at May 2020) within the public, private and community sector already dedicated to advancing gender equity. The Greater Bendigo against Family Violence Committee is a member of the Coalition, and is comprised of government, community and school representatives working together to raise awareness of family violence and how to prevent it. Women's Health Loddon Mallee plays a lead role in many gender equity initiatives in partnership with many other Coalition members including the Rural Challenge Gender Equality Leadership Program for local sporting clubs and CFA brigades and the Enabling Women Leadership Program for women with disabilities. The City of Greater Bendigo has been instrumental in the formation of the Coalition for Gender Equity and is a proud signatory to the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter, which promotes increasing women's participation in public life and greater diversity in key decision-making forums. The Greater Bendigo Community Plan 2017-2021, Greater Bendigo Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021 and the Human Rights Charter are overarching frameworks guiding local government priorities for Greater Bendigo which promote gender equality and the prevention of violence against women.



1.6 Inputs

What information did we use to develop the strategy?

In the development of the Gender Equity Strategy, the Coalition reviewed existing gender equality strategies and frameworks at the federal, state, regional and local level to help guide its priority objectives and settings. It also engaged the local community through hosting a Gender Equity workshop, consulting a variety of reference and advisory committees and conducting an online community survey to canvas community attitudes to gender equity and violence against women.

Gender Equity Community Survey

In November 2019, the Coalition disseminated a Community Gender Equity Survey to assess community attitudes towards gender equity and violence against women. The survey, drawn from the National Community Attitudes Survey, attracted 532 responses and provided valuable insight informing strategic objectives and a baseline to measure changes in community attitudes over time. The community was quite unanimous in identifying and condemning behaviours that constituted domestic violence however appeared to be more divided in attitudes concerning gender roles in the workplace and in intimate relationships. 10% of people held what is considered

to be rigid ideas of gender roles by agreeing that men make better political leaders and more capable bosses in the workplace and that women like men being in charge of intimate relationships. A quarter of people agreed that many women exaggerate how unequally they are treated in Australia and mistakenly interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist. 1 in 4 also indicated that they would not know how to seek advice or know how to support someone in a domestic violence relationship. The strategy focuses on attitudinal change as a priority objective with specific actions related to these findings.

Gender Equity Workshop

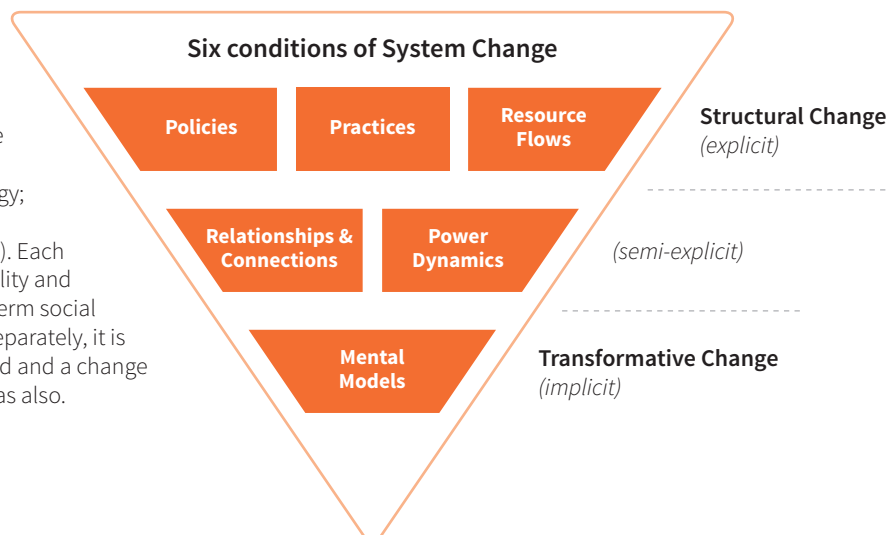
In December 2019, a consultative workshop was facilitated with 55 current and prospective Coalition members and community representatives to discuss the proposed framework of the Gender Equity Strategy. This workshop represented a diverse cross-section of the community including local and state government, Traditional Owner Groups, health services, sporting bodies, large corporations, educational and religious institutions, specialist services and a variety of reference groups (disability, youth and interfaith).



2.0 GENDER EQUITY STRATEGY

2.1 Adopting a Systems Change Framework

The Coalition Gender Equity Strategy has adopted a systems change framework²¹ which identifies six conditions that play a significant role in holding a social issue such as gender inequality in place. These six conditions fit into three main categories which inform the three objectives of the strategy; structural change (explicit); relational change (semi-explicit) and attitudinal change (implicit). Each of the objectives have varying degrees of visibility and require different approaches to achieve long-term social change. While each objective will be tackled separately, it is recognised that they are intrinsically connected and a change in one will likely affect change in the other areas also.



2.2 Strategic Objectives

1

Structural Change: The Explicit

To see policies, practices and dedicated resources which demonstrate commitment to the promotion of gender equity and the prevention of violence against women.

Outputs

- 1.1 To see workplaces, as required by legislation or voluntarily, develop gender equality action plans and report on their performance against workplace gender equality indicators outlined in the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 or Gender Equality Act 2020, including:
 - Gender composition of all levels of the workforce
 - Gender composition of governing bodies
 - Equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value across all levels of the workforce
 - Sexual harassment in the workplace
 - Recruitment and promotion practices in the workplace
 - Family Violence Leave
 - Flexible Working Arrangements
 - Supporting employees with family or caring responsibilities
 - Gendered segregation in the workplace
- 1.2 To see workplaces utilise the resources of reputable gender equality agencies in the development of gender equality action plans, policies and practices such as the Workplace Gender Equality Agency or OurWatch.
- 1.3 To see community and health organisations develop and implement programs and services with a gender lens; ensuring staff are adequately trained in gender sensitivity and intersectionality.
- 1.4 To see urban planning and design consider gender-inclusivity and intersectional discrimination to promote an inclusive, safe and welcoming environment for all people.
- 1.5 To see the impacts of gender roles and intersectional discrimination considered in the planning and implementation of emergency management and disaster recovery.
- 1.6 To see educational institutions and sport and recreational organisations and clubs develop targeted strategies to increase male, female and gender diverse participation in non-traditional areas of study, sport and recreational activities.
- 1.7 To develop a mechanism for Coalition members to report and evaluate progress in achieving Gender Equity Strategy objectives.

2

Relational Change: The Semi Explicit

To see transformed respectful relationships between people within a diverse community through better connectedness and communication.

Outputs

- 2.1 To ensure the Coalition for Gender Equity is inclusive and representative of its diverse community in its membership.
- 2.2 To promote increased gender diversity in elected representative roles in the community.
- 2.3 To see increased gender diversity in senior management and governance in workplaces and community organisations.
- 2.4 To see young people consistently exposed to gender equity principles in their formal and informal educational and learning environments.
- 2.5 To see an increase in the availability of and participation in programs which challenge rigid gender stereotypes and promote respectful relationships and healthy masculinities.
- 2.6 To see Coalition members develop an action group for each priority setting and work alongside the community to implement actions according to its strategic objectives.
- 2.7 To see Coalition members strengthen their capacity and commitment to gender equity.

3

Attitudinal Change: The Implicit

To see evidence of change in individual attitudes and behaviours towards a personal commitment to gender equity and the prevention of violence against women.

Outputs

- 3.1 To see positive changes in community attitudes towards gender and the prevention of violence against women over time.
- 3.2 To facilitate safe and inclusive community dialogue about gender equity and violence against women and children.
- 3.3 To raise awareness of gender equity, violence against women and children, and available support services to culturally and linguistically diverse communities, with particular focus on newly arrived migrant and refugee communities.
- 3.4 To raise community understanding and awareness of intersectionality, acknowledging the complex interplay of factors including gender, age, disability, sexuality and migration status.
- 3.5 To see Coalition members facilitate a safe and welcoming platform for people facing intersectional discrimination to share their experiences to inform more effective practices.
- 3.6 To see organisations and the community better equipped to overcome resistance and respond to backlash to gender equity.
- 3.7 To see community members understand their vital role as an active bystander and have the confidence to safely act if they witness discriminatory speech or behaviour.

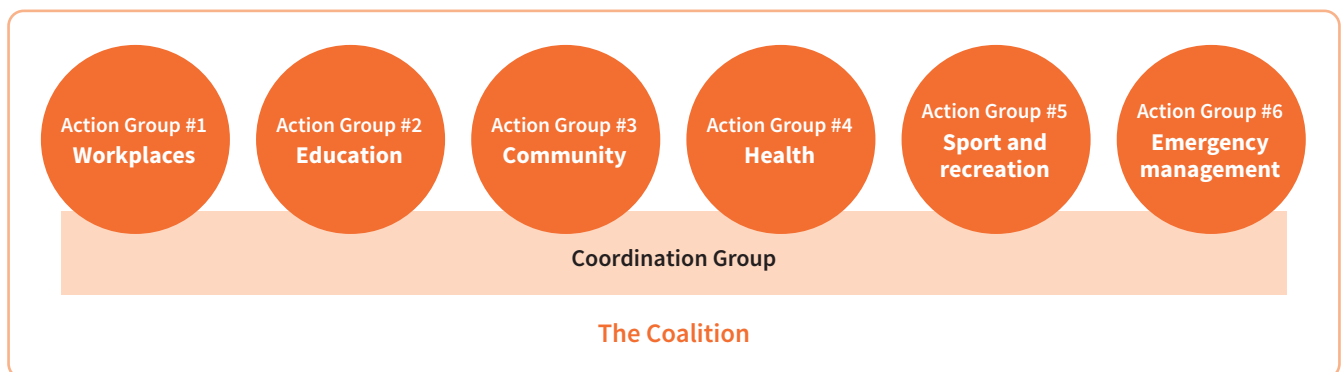


2.3 Strategic Priority Settings

The Coalition for Gender Equity is made up of organisations and community groups with access to and influence within the settings listed below which will form the Strategy's priority settings. For key settings not yet identified in the Strategy, the Coalition will work to actively increase representation in its membership to enable access to and influence in these settings.

- Workplaces
- Community
- Health
- Education
- Sport and Recreation
- Emergency Management

2.4 Strategy Implementation and Evaluation



Coalition Implementation Model

The Coalition

Coalition members are jointly responsible for the resourcing required to implement the Gender Equity Strategy. Coalition members will nominate a setting in which to invest their resources and form an action group with other Coalition members within their nominated setting.

Action Groups

An action group will be established for each priority setting outlined in the strategy. Each group will develop an annual action plan to help achieve the three objectives of the Gender Equity Strategy. Each group will identify a lead Coalition member and can be open to any community groups or individuals who wish to help develop and implement the action plan for that setting. Action groups will provide progress updates on their action plan at Coalition meetings.

Coordination Group

A Coordination group will provide backbone administrative support to Coalition members including the coordination of progress updates and production of annual reports against the strategy. The Coordination group will also provide the administrative mechanisms for collective campaigns and initiatives involving the whole Coalition.

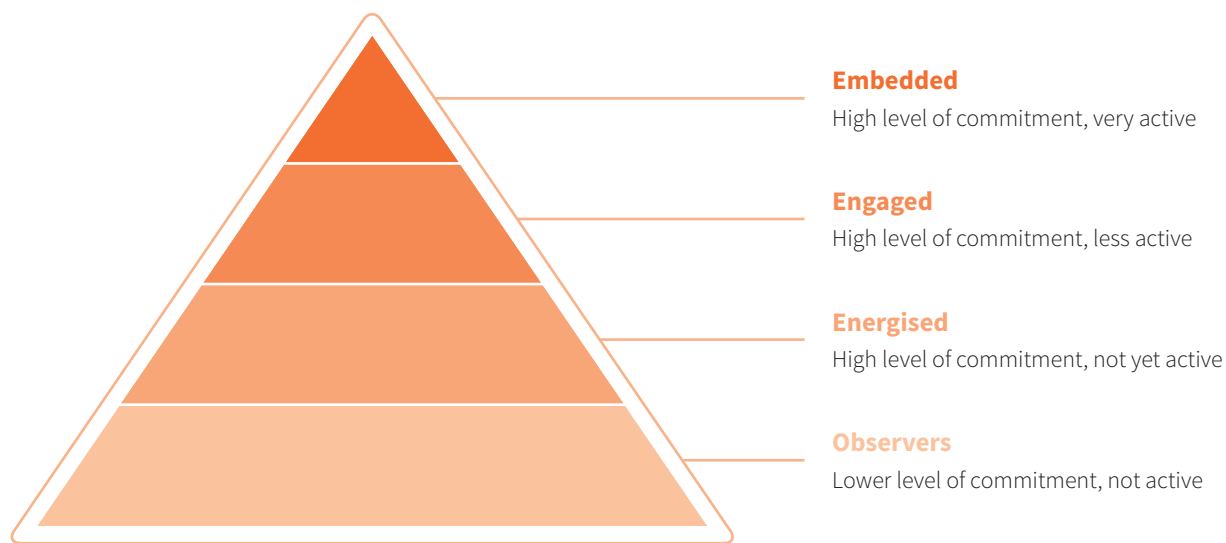
Evaluation and Reporting

The Coalition will evaluate its progress in implementing the Gender Equity Strategy through the *Results Based Accountability* evaluation method. This method will evaluate the quantity, quality and effectiveness of the Coalition's efforts in achieving its strategic objectives. A process evaluation will be undertaken three times per year ahead of Coalition meetings to provide an on-going progress report on the status of each active action. The Coordination group will support the Coalition to produce an annual report to provide to the community. At the end of each annual reporting cycle, the Coalition will meet to evaluate progress, determine any changes required to the strategy and meet with their action groups to develop an action plan for the year ahead.

2.5 Communication and Meeting Model

Coalition	Meets three times a year to build connection, communication and capacity across the Coalition and to report action plan progress against the strategy.
Action Groups	Meets once every two months to monitor progress in implementing action plans and share best practice and professional development.
Coordination Group	Meets three times per year (after initial establishment phase) to discuss progress updates of action groups and prepare Annual report for community and Council.

2.6 Evaluation of Coalition



Coalition Engagement Model

In addition to evaluating progress towards achieving the Strategy's objectives, it is critical to measure the commitment and capacity of individual Coalition members to advancing gender equity and the effectiveness of the Coalition in equipping Coalition members with what they need to develop in their growth and commitment to gender equity. The Coalition will utilise the *Principles Focused Evaluation Method* to assist in its evaluation of these important elements.

One of the key measures of success for the Strategy will be assessing whether partners continue to progress up the partnership pyramid. The aim of Coalition activity is to encourage increased commitment and collaboration in advancing gender equity and to provide opportunities for embedded or engaged organisations to mentor and build the capacity of those who identify as lesser engaged or experienced. Coalition members will be encouraged to annually self-assess their level of engagement against an agreed capability framework.

APPENDIX

1. World Economic Forum, 2015
2. Workplace Gender Equality Agency, The Business Case: <https://bit.ly/2wY9hTS>
3. KPMG 2018, Ending Workforce Discrimination Against Women: <https://bit.ly/2RWgmeR>
4. KPMG 2016, The cost of violence against women and children in Australia: <https://bit.ly/3cAJG2u>
5. Our Watch, About Us: <https://bit.ly/2VpCTD9>
6. WDV, Violence against women with disabilities: <https://bit.ly/3cAQME9>
7. Victorian Women's Health Atlas: <https://bit.ly/3cDeJL9>
8. Victorian Women's Health Atlas: <https://bit.ly/3cDeJL9>
9. Walk, Cycle Greater Bendigo 2019: <https://bit.ly/2wZg1kq>
10. Victorian Women's Health Atlas: <https://bit.ly/38BT5Fw>
11. The Australian Human Rights Commission: A conversation in Gender Equality, 2017: <https://bit.ly/2P5hz1Q>
12. The Man Box: A Study on being a young man in Australia, 2018: <https://bit.ly/34T3Kui>
13. National Men's Health Strategy 2020-2030: <https://bit.ly/3eCaFfV>
14. Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, National Mental Health Report, 2013: <https://bit.ly/2wZWwbu>
15. National Men's Health Strategy 2020-2030: <https://bit.ly/3eCaFfV>
16. National Men's Health Strategy 2020-2030: <https://bit.ly/3eCaFfV>
17. Vic Health, Health of trans and gender diverse people: <https://bit.ly/2VJ7SJg>
18. National Museum of Australia, equal pay for women: <https://bit.ly/2XY37hJ>
19. Department of Social Services, The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children: <https://bit.ly/2VLVqbr>
20. The Loddon Mallee Action Plan for the primary prevention of violence against women (2016-2019) pg 11: <https://bit.ly/38LPk0k>
21. FSG 2018, Water of Systems Change: <https://bit.ly/2Y258cM>

View current members of the Greater Bendigo Coalition for Gender Equity on the City of Greater Bendigo website www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/coalition-gender-equity



