



Gender Equality @ Parks Victoria

Parks Victoria is committed to the delivery of its *Gender Equality Action Plan 2022–2026* (GEAP). It is our belief that supporting gender equality and diversity and inclusion within our workforce is central to our development as a modern, high performing, sustainable organisation. Through our GEAP, our vision is to foster a workplace where:

- people feel safe and free from discrimination and sexual harassment
- women feel empowered and have professional development opportunities and pathways that are actively being promoted
- there is a diversity in thinking
- there is equality and equity in everything we do
- people feel safe and empowered to challenge, speak up and call out behaviours
- that offers, promotes, normalises and rewards flexibility through critical life stages, regardless of gender.

Gender equality work is not new to Parks Victoria, given our past successful Diversity and Inclusion theme 'Women in Parks'. The GEAP has a natural connection to our *Diversity and Inclusion Framework 2022-2027* and an intersectional lens was applied when the GEAP was developed and in meeting the obligations of the Gender Equality Act.

Our GEAP seeks to address the effect of gender intersecting with other factors and the impact this has on employee development, career progression and job satisfaction.

We are proud of our diversity and inclusion achievements for our employees and park visitors, including:

- successful implementation of the Sponsorship of Diverse Talent Program, led by Parks Victoria as an Emergency Management Victoria program (GEAP)
- 41% of roles are held by women, with women holding 50% of Executive positions, exceeding our targets (GEAP)
- 56% of members of our governing bodies are women
- participation in the annual Midsumma Pride March, celebration of IDAHOBIT Day and 'Wear it Purple Day'
- updates to Parks Victoria's recruitment, selection and appointment procedures to reduce unconscious bias, improve the accessibility of position descriptions and support in preparing for interviews
- development and roll out of 'Respect in the Workplace' training, with modules focusing on racism, bullying and harassment, sexual harassment and unconscious bias.

STAND UP FOR RESPECT

Stand against sexual harassment in all its forms



Case study: Zero tolerance for workplace sexual harassment

Parks Victoria is committed to building and nurturing a safe and inclusive work environment where the inherent value of each person, regardless of background, where we live, what we look like, what we think or what we believe, is recognised. A safe and inclusive work environment where our employees, and our visitors feel like they belong. As part of that commitment, Parks Victoria has zero tolerance for sexual harassment, racism and discrimination, bullying, or harassment.

During the reporting period, Parks Victoria reviewed its approach to sexual harassment education and reporting (safety incidents and grievances). Towards the end of the reporting period, we developed our 'Respect in the Workplace' training series, to raise awareness of what inappropriate behaviours are, build our organisational capability to be behaviourally compliant and be an ally in the prevention of these harmful behaviours. Since the reporting period, we have successfully rolled this series out and have seen an increase in inappropriate behaviours being called out, as we work to build our 'safe to speak up' culture across the organisation.

Achievements

Achievement of our actions and measures under the GEAP pillars **Opportunities**, **Experience**, **Culture** and **Data**, demonstrate the meaningful and sustainable changes Parks Victoria is making. It shows linking to the Diversity and Inclusion Framework and our successes in Parks Victoria being a safe, inclusive and contemporary workplace for all.

Parks Victoria has made significant progress toward promoting and improving gender equality and diversity and inclusion in its workplace and parks. Achievements against our GEAP pillars are:



Opportunities

Creating and promoting opportunities

During the reporting period, Parks Victoria has made significant progress toward promoting and improving gender equality in the workplace, most notably through our recruitment strategy and practices which have included the following initiatives:

- Developing and circulating promotional materials, including videos and imagery, that showcase the great work of our female Rangers to attract prospective new employees.
- Requiring a gender and/or diversity mix on recruitment selection panels.
- Ensuring that the diverse panel is involved at all stages of the selection process, including shortlisting candidates.
- Reviewing and amending the organisation wide interview guide to include mandatory questioning around culture and values, employment background and motivation to work for Parks Victoria. A motivator for this change was to rely less on testing for manual skills that usually favored male applicants.

This approach has been particularly influential in addressing our gendered work segregation:

- There was a 25% increase of female representation in Ranger roles from 2021 to 2023.
- There was a 12% increase of female representation in at the Executive and Director level from 2021 to 2023.
- 56% of members of our governing bodies are women, which is above the government 50/50 policy.
- At least 50% of Board Committees is made up of women.

During the reporting period, the Parks Victoria Enterprise Agreement 2021 was approved. This Agreement reflects gender neutral language, and includes family violence leave, and increased secondary carer's leave (from 2 to 4 weeks).

Parks Victoria's flexible work procedure allows employees to work from home for 40% of their work week as their normal work arrangement. Among other benefits, this has assisted employees to better meet their personal, relationship and family needs.

People managers have regular conversations with their teams about flexible work, including through the performance development plan (PDP) process. The PDP provides a structured formal opportunity for managers to raise the topic and explore ways of working with their staff, to best support them in their circumstances, which may include flexible start and finish times, working a compressed week and using leave to work flexible hours.

Parks Victoria continues to encourage employees to take the leave that they need, in order to look after themselves and their families, and support employee life stages, including pregnancy and early childhood.

Further enhancements that have been implemented to support opportunities for women include:

- Women actively being engaged through the Emergency Management Victoria, Forest Fire Management Victoria and Champions of Change Coalition actions.
- Prioritisation of women's learning through Parks Victoria's 70:20:10 learning and development model.
- Women being able to be supported to review travel requirements and connect using technology and through hybrid working arrangements.

Experience

Understanding & sharing experiences

At Parks Victoria, our women are proud of the strong relationships they have built across all of Victoria, as they can safely share their experiences through:

- ◆ Regional mentoring programs focused on the specific needs of women in those groups.
- ◆ The community they have established where they willingly share stories on their career formally and informally, whether it be moving into leadership, having a disability, undertaking a fire role, having carer responsibilities, working part time or job sharing and addressing sexual harassment.

Culture

A safe, empowered & diverse culture

Parks Victoria is building a safe and inclusive culture through:

- ◆ Clear sponsorship for gender initiatives, relating to gender composition at all levels of the workforce.
- ◆ Safe and inclusive workplace and sexual harassment training that includes bystander training and tools.

Data

Measuring & acting on data findings

Parks Victoria commenced the delivery of a Strategic Workforce Plan during the reporting period to leverage improvements in work and workforce design to create mutually beneficial capability development opportunities, whilst continuing to recruit capable and diverse people who align with Parks Victoria's values to ensure gender balance opportunities for allowances, salary, leave tenure, pay gap and rosters.

Parks Victoria has a 'zero tolerance' approach for all inappropriate behaviour where action is taken for all sexual harassment incidents perpetrated by Parks Victoria employees, employees of other agencies and by members of the community. Employees are aware that there isn't a deadline for reporting historical incidents. Aggregated data, trend analysis and actions taken are regularly reported and discussed at the Board and the Executive team meetings.

Case study: Advocacy for women

Parks Victoria's passionate female employees have set up and continue to grow 'Women of...' networks around the state, with the aim to bring together women to identify and address cultural and safety challenges relating to women in a predominantly male workplace. Parks Victoria is an active participant in the 'Women in Fire' group developed by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action to address inequality in fire and emergency leadership roles.

Parks Victoria supports and celebrates our fantastic women in leadership roles, and were exceptionally proud of Executive Director Operations, Kylie Trott, Director People and Culture, Rebecca Quinn, and Executive Director, People, Safety and Risk and Chief Legal Counsel, Margaret Gillespie, who have all been recognised in the IPAA Victoria Top 50 Public Sector Women awards.

We actively encourage inclusive nature experiences on our Parks Victoria website, promoting female led businesses to enhance the feeling of safety and supporting women and girls to connect with nature.

Reflections and next priorities

There is much more work we need to do to ensure that Parks Victoria achieves its gender equality goals. Parks Victoria is dedicated to leading sustainable and meaningful change at each level of the organisation, with the following actions and measures being our next priorities:

- ◆ Enhance diversity & inclusion data collection through a revised approach, with more structured reporting in performance and development plans and allowing confidential volunteering of information through biannual surveying, to boost the quality of our data collection.
- ◆ Create more structured data capturing relating to the utilisation of terms, conditions and practices for family violence leave, flexible working arrangements, and working arrangements supporting employees with family or caring responsibilities.
- ◆ Due to the operational nature of work that Parks Victoria deliver, we operate with traditionally gender segregated roles, where historically we have recruited and retained a predominantly male workforce (including Ranger and Fire roles). Gendered segregation will continue to be a focus through gender balanced recruitment for areas under-represented by women, and supporting women into leadership through acting positions, leadership development and mentoring. In 2025 we will be negotiating our new Enterprise Agreement and will ensure we continue to apply gender equality principles in its development.